

SPECIALIST LEADERS OF EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

AN EVALUATIVE CASE STUDY

By

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## ABSTRACT

This research constitutes an evaluative case study of Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) deployed through one Teaching School Alliance (TSA) in the English West Midlands and their contribution to leadership development. While the Government purports that enactment of and engagement with the role will develop leadership capacity, the study explores SLE, recipient and head teacher perceptions across eleven primary schools as to whether this broad aim has been achieved and seeks to inform the research agenda at a time when a leadership recruitment shortage is anticipated. The study considers how leadership learning is both conceptualised and facilitated across deployments and whether or not 'professional growth' occurred. A new conceptualisation of professional growth is offered that synthesizes key tenets from the literature and themes emerging from the findings. This includes the notion of a transformed view aligned with greater 'role conceptualisation', socialisation experiences and a sense of belonging fostering a coherent 'leadership identity' and self belief leading to increased 'personal capacity'. Outcomes of the study suggest that professional growth in these aspects did occur for SLEs and their recipients through engagement with the SLE programme where successful matches were made. Modifications in order to best achieve the desired outcomes are also recommended.

## DEDICATION

To my mum and dad,  
thank you for your love and support always that has made this possible.

To my husband,  
for your ongoing encouragement and for always having faith in me.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

DfE	Department for Education (England)
LLE	Local Leader of Education
MLE	Middle Leader of Education
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NCSLCS	National College for School Leadership and Children's Services
NCTL	National College for Teaching and Leadership
NLE	National Leader of Education
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NPQML	National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership
NPQSL	National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership
SLE	Specialist Leader of Education
TSA	Teaching School Alliance

## **USEFUL TERMS**

Middle leader	A teacher with additional responsibilities outside of their class, such as a subject, phase leader or assistant head teacher.
Senior leader	A head or deputy head teacher.
Home school	The school in which the SLE is employed as a member of staff.
Recipient school	The school in which the SLE is deployed to enact their SLE support role.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and the role of the 'Specialist Leader of Education'

It is widely perceived that effective leadership contributes to outstanding schools and improved pupil outcomes (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Bush, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2009). Indeed, Leithwood et al. (2008) suggest that 'School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning' (p27). However, the notion of leadership recruitment difficulties is well documented (NCSL, 2007; Rhodes et al., 2008; Morrison and Ecclestone, 2011) and has been described as an 'impending leadership crisis' (Rhodes et al., 2008, p311). The desire for outstanding leaders and consequently, for leadership development programmes is therefore a key aspect of Government policy in England; it has been suggested that 'Leadership development and succession planning has never been more important' (NCSL, 2007, p15). With the publication of the Government's 'White Paper' (Department for Education, 2010) it is clear that the landscape for school leadership development is changing. The 'National College for Teaching and Leadership' (NCTL), now an 'Executive Agency of the Department for Education' is the 'dominant force' in school leadership development in England (Bush, 2013). Established in 2000 under the former Labour Government as the 'National College of School Leadership' (NCSL), it briefly transitioned into the 'National College for School Leadership and Children's Services' (NCSLCS) prior to becoming the NCTL. Recently adopting a 'licensing' system to privatise the delivery of national leadership development programmes and courses, such as the 'National Professional Qualification for Headship' (NPQH), the NCTL remains the leading 'brand' in leadership development (Bush,

2013). However, in addition to national programmes, a key approach is the development of leaders within and across groups of schools, demonstrating a 'lateral' growth of leadership potential and the development of 'system' leaders (Matthews et al., 2011). This approach has led to the creation of Local Leaders of Education (LLEs), National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and 'Teaching School Alliances' (TSAs) which are central to the Government's leadership development strategy. The appointment and deployment of 'Specialist Leaders of Education' (SLEs) to develop leadership capacity is a key element of TSAs' remit and Government policy. The research in this study constitutes an evaluative case study of the deployment of SLEs from one TSA in the West Midlands and their contribution to leadership development.

The first incarnation of the SLE was the 'Middle Leader of Education' (MLE) in the 'City Challenge Leadership Strategies in Greater Manchester' (Lamont and Bramley, 2011). This initiative was developed in Manchester specifically to develop middle leaders through focused school-to-school support in addition to that provided to head teachers through LLEs and NLEs. The MLE programme in Manchester 'transitioned' into the SLE pilot, deploying skilled middle and senior leaders (not head teachers) who could 'support colleagues in other schools to build leadership capacity... with proven impact' (Lamont and Bramley, 2011, p7). Currently, there are 3,800 SLEs deployed through TSAs across the country, with the number expected to increase to 5000 by 2015 (NCTL, 2014a). SLEs themselves are expected to be 'experienced middle and senior leaders' who are 'interested in supporting leaders in other schools' (NCTL, 2014a). The Government suggests that the SLE role should focus on 'developing leadership

capacity', rather than classroom practice through a range of strategies such as coaching, data analysis and training; the fundamental aim is to develop other leaders so that they have the skills to lead their own teams and improve practice in their own schools (NCTL, 2014a). SLEs are appointed through a competitive interview process by a TSA, then participate in a 'core training day' (NCTL, 2014a). Their areas of expertise are then matched to the requirements of schools seeking support or, support is brokered by the TSA on behalf of the Local Authority (LA), and deployments are undertaken. For the purpose of this study, the term 'middle leaders' is used to describe leaders within schools who are not head or deputy head teachers: these may include assistant head teachers, phase and subject leaders. The term 'senior leaders' refers to head and deputy head teachers.

## **1.2 Aim of the study and research questions**

The aim of this research is to conduct an evaluative case study of the deployment of SLEs through one TSA in the West Midlands, considering to what extent the aims of the Government are perceived to have been met and the implications of this. In early documentation, the Government asserted that being an SLE afforded benefits for the SLE themselves, the SLE's home school and the recipient school (NCTL, 2012). More recently, the Government suggests that SLEs are expected to show that their work has had 'a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people by developing leadership capacity in other schools' (NCTL, 2014a, np). Given the problematic nature of demonstrating specific pupil outcomes as a direct result of leadership activities (Bush, 2008), in this study, these very broad Government aims have been refined to a series of research questions. The first

focuses on how leadership learning within the SLE deployments might be conceptualised in different schools; what are the nature of the deployments? Can any common features be identified that might be deemed good practice for leadership development programmes? What are the expectations and perceived responsibilities of the role? The second question considers how leadership learning for both the SLE and the recipient was facilitated; what strategies for leadership learning were regarded as successful? The third question explores what leadership learning might have occurred, in terms of professional growth for both the SLEs and the recipients they worked with. Finally, the last research question focuses on other perceived successes and considers how the experience might be modified for improvement; did engagement with the programme offer benefits to the SLE, their home school and the recipient school as initially suggested by the Government? The research questions therefore, are as follows:

- 1. How is leadership learning within the SLE deployments conceptualised in different schools?*
- 2. How has the SLE deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?*
- 3. What professional growth may have occurred for the SLE/recipient as a result of the SLE deployment?*
- 4. How can the SLE experience be modified in order to best achieve its desired outcomes?*

### **1.3 Why this study is important**

This study is important for a number of reasons. In terms of national policy, the SLE role is in its infancy, with a growing number of deployments. It is therefore of great interest to explore how effective the role is in terms of meeting the intended expectations and what procedures might be regarded as best practice, at a time when as yet, there are no clear measures in place for quality assurance (NCTL,

2012). In addition to this, middle leaders in schools are increasingly seen as key agents with great responsibility (Blandford, 2006; Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2006; Cordingley et al., 2010), effective leadership development therefore, specifically at this level is of significance. In addition to this a 'leadership crisis' has been acknowledged (Rhodes et al., 2008); the NCSL (2007) have described this as a 'demographic time-bomb', and that 'developing leaders, at all levels, is now both imperative and integral to school and system success' (p7). In exploring how the role might be conceptualised, how and what learning takes place and how the experience might be modified for improvement, it is possible to offer recommendations for practice as the role develops nationally and for effective leadership development in a changing educational landscape.

In addition, established theoretical perspectives are drawn upon to advance the research further. In exploring how leadership learning is conceptualised, approaches to leadership development are reviewed (Bush et al., 2007; Dimmock, 2012) as well as theories of adult learning (Kolb, 1984; Eraut, 2000; Billet, 2008; Torrance, 2013). In light of these, a new conceptualisation of leadership development both within and across schools is offered. To address the research question relating to how leadership learning is facilitated, for the SLE, the notion of 'lateral development' (Matthews et al., 2011) is drawn upon as well as Gronn's (1999) sequential model of the lives of leaders. Personalised strategies for successful leadership development such as coaching and modelling are explored in relation to leadership learning for the recipients (Hallinger and Snidvings, 2005; Hanbury, 2009) as well as recognising the significance of 'emotion' in the journey to senior leadership (Crawford, 2007). In exploring the nature of leadership



learning, the notion of 'professional growth' is offered as a term that encapsulates learning that occurred for SLEs and recipients. Browne-Ferrigno (2003), suggests that professional growth includes the aspects of role conceptualisation, socialisation, role identity transformation and purposeful engagement based on career aspirations. However, while Browne-Ferrigno (2003) uses this model to explore the journey to principalship, here the framework is re-worked and applied to the context of middle leaders on their journey to senior leadership roles. Based on the findings here, new typologies are presented exploring the aspects of role conceptualisation and a transformed point of view, the concept of 'belonging' and professional identity and the notion of 'personal capacity' based upon self belief. Finally, to answer how the role can be modified to best achieve its desired outcomes, both tensions within the role and its wider successes are explored, contributing to literature concerning the best practice for leadership learning (Bush, 2008; Macbeath and Dempster, 2009; Dimmock, 2012).

As an assistant head teacher (middle leader) at a large primary school in the West Midlands I am also keenly interested in how the nature of leadership development is changing to meet the demands of the current educational climate and the Government's new agenda for schools. Having worked for seventeen years in one school that now forms part of a TSA I have both experience of working in the locality and access to SLEs and their recipient schools. In my research design, I acknowledge that two of the SLEs and one head teacher who took part in this study are colleagues at the school in which I am employed; I do not know or have any professional relationship with any other participants in this study.

## **1.4 Literature review**

The fundamental role of the SLE as set out by the Government, is to 'improve the quality of school leadership through school-to-school support and peer-to-peer learning, ultimately raising standards...' (NCTL, 2012, np). This evaluative case study therefore draws upon literature concerning the nature of effective leadership, both 'within' and, in the current educational landscape, 'across' schools as well as literature focusing on the perceived importance of leadership itself. With the SLE role aimed at developing 'middle' leaders, literature pertinent to middle leadership roles and responsibilities is also critically reviewed. In addition to this, the concept of 'leadership development' is explored: why it is thought necessary; its content; the processes employed and the context in which it is delivered. Literature concerning 'talent management' as an element of leadership development is also reviewed. Finally, literature pertinent to the notion of professional growth is explored, featuring the elements of: role conceptualisation; socialisation; role identity transformation; purposeful engagement and self belief. In this literature review, a range of sources are utilised including professional publications and documents from the NCTL, research papers and online sources. This research base frames the research questions and provides a conceptual framework within which to analyse the findings.

In order to evaluate an initiative in terms of its contribution to leadership, the concept of 'effective leadership' must first be explored. In the literature review, typologies offered by Day et al. (2010) and Barber et al. (2010) are drawn upon to identify key features of effective leadership as well as the personal attributes thought necessary to be a successful senior leader (Day, 2008; Davies, 2008).

The perceived importance of leadership is also discussed. Although it is acknowledged that there is difficulty in identifying direct leadership effects on student outcomes (Bush, 2008) it is argued that effective and outstanding leadership is necessary for a school to be successful (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Bush, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2009). This notion is reflected in the recent Ofsted inspection framework, in which 'Leadership and Management' is one of the four main strands (Ofsted, 2014). In addition to this, literature concerning contemporary models of leadership is also reviewed, including that of 'learning centred', 'distributed' and 'system' leadership (Bush, 2008; Day et al., 2010, Matthews et al., 2011). Given that the SLE role is aimed at middle leaders both in terms of those undertaking the job and those in receipt of it, literature concerning the role and responsibilities of middle leadership is explored. It is argued that the role of the middle leader is increasingly significant in schools (NCSL, 2006; Briggs, 2007; Zhang, 2013); despite this however, it is suggested that there is less interest and research focusing on this tier of leadership (Barber et al., 2010; Zhang, 2013). In terms of the role and responsibilities of the middle leader, literature suggests that the role encompasses being both a good role model for classroom practice as well as having a 'vision' and leading departments, leading to discordance in professional identity (Busher, 2005).

Given the importance of leadership in schools and concerns of a 'crisis' in leadership recruitment (Rhodes et al., 2008), developing leaders and leadership capacity is a key strand of Government policy (Bush et al., 2007, NCSL, 2007; Bush, 2008; Department for Education, 2010). The literature drawn upon here explores why leadership development is thought necessary and what good

leadership development might look like (Bush, 2008; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009; Dimmock, 2012). Literature concerning the ‘content’ of leadership development programmes is also explored as the NCTL’s current curriculum for leadership development is critically reviewed. In addition to this, literature relevant to the ‘processes’ of leadership learning is considered; coaching and modelling are highlighted as effective learning strategies (Holmes, 2003; Hanbury, 2009; Matthews et al., 2011) as well as the process of socialisation for effective leadership preparation (Heck, 2003; Zhang and Brundrett, 2010). Literature pertaining to the ‘context’ in which leadership development occurs is also relevant here. Theories of adult learning (Kolb, 1984; Eraut, 2000; Billet, 2008) suggest that adults learn best through experience in a social context, congruent to notions of ‘on the job’ learning. It is also suggested that leadership development works best when it is delivered through wider organisational improvement objectives (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007). The literature of ‘talent management’ is also drawn upon as the concept of ‘grow your own’ leaders within and across schools has emerged (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Davies and Davies, 2013).

To evaluate the contribution of the SLE role in terms of what leadership learning was facilitated, literature concerning the notion of professional growth is reviewed. Bowne-Ferrigno’s (2003) empirical study of the transition to headship of practitioners participating on a principal preparation programme is drawn upon to facilitate further discussion focusing on role conceptualisation, initial socialisation, role-identity transformation, purposeful engagement and self belief constituting a framework within which to analyse and discuss the findings.

## 1.5 Research design

This research seeks to determine if the SLE role delivers what is promised by the Government; is leadership capacity increased through engagement with the programme? Are there benefits to the SLE, their home school and their recipient schools? Although it might be suggested that this work would sit in the 'evaluative' domain (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003), this is more concerned with research that seeks to measure impact against specific outcomes; in this study, an attempt to measure the impact of leadership development activities against pupil outcomes would be problematic (Bush, 2008). Rather, this research focuses on perceptions of professional growth; individual stories of development experiences. Described as being concerned 'with gathering and theorising from the experiences... of those who are leaders' this study therefore, sits firmly within the 'humanistic domain' of 'knowledge provinces' (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003, p133). Focusing on the experiences of individuals in this way, allows questions such as, *'How are professional identities shaped by leadership experiences?'* to be asked (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003, p135); questions that are crucial to facilitate an understanding of what, if any, leadership learning and professional growth occurred. Such a research design reflects an 'interpretivist' approach to knowledge and understanding; the belief that there is no single truth, that 'the world... is constructed by each of us in a different way' (Thomas, 2009, p75). This philosophical stance is also illuminated through the 'case study' design and the 'qualitative' nature of the empirical work undertaken; both features associated with the 'interpretivist' paradigm (Thomas, 2009). Focusing on participants' perceptions, feelings and beliefs, the overarching research strategy may be regarded as 'phenomenology' (Denscombe, 2010).

This research constitutes an evaluative case study. Commonly used to ‘assess how effective a programme of activity has been’ (Thomas, 2009, p122), ‘evaluation’ is appropriate here, to assess how effective the new SLE role is. While a full evaluation may often be large in scale (Thomas, 2009), to explore the professional growth of individuals, this evaluation requires a smaller, more in depth study. The nature of this work, therefore lends itself to an evaluative ‘case study’ design. Thomas (2009) states that a case study is ‘in-depth research into one case’ (p115) and Denscombe (2010) that its focus is ‘just one instance of the thing that is to be investigated’ (p52). This evaluative case study therefore, concentrates on the deployment of SLEs in one TSA in the West Midlands and focuses on their leadership learning and the leadership learning of their recipients. This TSA was selected as the case due to the fact that I am employed as an assistant head teacher in one of the schools that forms part of the Alliance; this granted me access to the SLEs and the recipient schools. Yin (2009) suggests the case study design can provide an understanding of a ‘real-life phenomenon in depth’ (p18); this evaluative case study provides rich and in depth data of this single case, in this particular context and enables the research questions to be addressed.

## **1.6 Research methods and management of the project**

Although Yin (2009) suggests that a case study must rely on ‘multiple sources of evidence’, Bassey (1999) asserts that case study research is ‘eclectic’ and that researchers must use whatever methods are appropriate (p69). This is in line with Simons (2009) and Golby (1994) who also suggest that the selection of methods are ‘strategic decisions’ for the researcher to make (Golby, 1994, p23) and methods should be selected that have ‘the potential to inform your research

questions' (Simons, 2009, p34). For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews have been selected as the most appropriate method of data collection for stories of professional growth and leadership learning in order to address the research questions. 'Interviews' were selected for a number of reasons. Thomas (2009) suggests that undertaking an interview offers 'ready-made support' (p160), that most interviewees will respond more enthusiastically than they would have for example, by completing a questionnaire. Thomas (2009) continues to suggest that this face to face contact enables the interviewer to use gesture or words to encourage the interviewee and to watch for nuances in their behaviour, which can be important in determining what is meant. In this study, in order facilitate respondent triangulation to strengthen 'trustworthiness' (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2013) a range of perspectives are sought. These include the head of the TSA, the manager of the TSA, seven SLEs, three head teachers of SLEs and nine recipients (three of which are head teachers of the recipient schools, two are deputy head teachers and four are middle leaders). All interviews took place after participants had been involved in at least one deployment, over a period of eighteen months. The 'semi-structured' interviews focused on the nature of the deployments, how the learning took place, what learning occurred and what might be improved.

The sample for this study is 'purposive' (Denscombe, 2010); participants were selected to provide 'quality information and valuable insights' (p35) to inform the research questions. Selecting the sample was undertaken in liaison with the head of the TSA who provided details of the SLEs and their deployments across recipient schools. The length and nature of each deployment was noted, as well as

the particular context of each school and the position and experience of the participants. The interviews were recorded then transcribed. The data was then analysed drawing upon relevant data analysis literature including Brundrett and Rhodes (2013) and Miles et al. (2014). The data analysis process consisted of: becoming familiar with the data; coding and categorizing; identifying connections; interpreting the data and returning to the research questions.

### 1.7 Ethical considerations

Before undertaking this research, prior approval was granted from The University of Birmingham Ethics Committee. In all aspects of the work, the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and The University of Birmingham's ethical guidelines are adhered to, demonstrating the fundamental principles of:

- *protecting the interests of the participants;*
- *ensuring that participation is voluntary and based on informed consent;*
- *avoiding deception and operates with scientific integrity and*
- *complies with the laws of the land (Denscombe, 2010, p331).*

Informed consent was secured from all participants and all responses were treated confidentially, used only for the purpose of this research. The respondents were informed of how the data would be used and to whom it would be reported. As a colleague of three of the participants in this study and as an employee of one of the schools in the TSA, I acknowledge my position in the research; this is recognised and addressed in **Chapter 3**.



This evaluative aspect of this case study is concerned with the processes through which leadership learning takes place and the perceived professional growth of individuals. The 'evaluative' aspect does not focus on how well the SLE performs in their deployment, their direct impact on student outcomes or the how well the recipient schools are performing; all of which may give rise to ethical concerns.

### **1.8 Value of the study**

This study is of value as it seeks to offer an evaluation of the role of the SLE in terms of their contribution to leadership development at a time when effective leadership is regarded as essential for outstanding schools and consequently, leadership development is a crucial aspect of Government policy in light of the impending leadership shortage. Coupled with this, aimed at developing middle leaders, an evaluation of SLE work is of significance as the role of the middle leader becomes increasingly important and complex, while the current paucity of research focusing on this level of leadership is well documented. This study takes the broad aims of the Government and refines them into a set of research questions that explore how the role might be conceptualised, how leadership learning is facilitated and what professional growth occurs. It explores and draws out modifications for improvement at a time when the role is itself still being developed. In addition to an evaluation of the role in terms of whether or not the expected Government outcomes have been achieved, the study builds upon existing theoretical frameworks to offer a new conceptualisation of leadership development that warrants further study, contributing to the knowledge base of leadership research. In addition to this, a new understanding of professional growth is presented, encompassing the elements of role conceptualisation, identity

and self belief. Within this, typologies are offered that demonstrate the notion of a 'transformed point of view' that is aligned with greater role conceptualisation, the importance of socialisation and a sense of 'belonging' in developing a coherent leadership identity and the concept of 'personal capacity' based on increased feelings of self belief. The study therefore has implications for policy makers and practitioners alike, in addition to educational researchers, offering both recommendations for practice and new understandings building upon key theoretical tenets in the literature.

### **1.9 Structure of the thesis**

This study is comprised of six parts: the introduction; the literature review; the research design; the discussion and the conclusion. The introduction outlines the study including its aims, research questions and a summary of the literature review, research design, methods of data collection, ethical considerations and value of the work. The literature review critically discusses key theoretical tenets that form a framework within which to place and analyse the findings. The literature review includes the themes of: leadership in and across schools; the role of the middle leader; leadership development and professional growth. The research design places this study within wider theoretical frameworks to demonstrate its place in the research tradition and outlines the philosophical approach that underpins the work. The research strategy, methodology and methods are described and justified and the management of the project is outlined. Following this, the findings are presented; themes emerging from the interview data are reported in relation to each research question in turn. The discussion chapter draws upon key theoretical frameworks identified in the literature review, to

provide a context within which to place and discuss the findings as new conceptualisations are developed. The study then ends with a conclusion, highlighting the contributions to knowledge made and offering both recommendations for practice and for further study.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This review offers a discussion of the key literature relating to the central themes pertinent to the aims of the study, providing a theoretical framework within which to place this work and discuss its findings. Firstly, literature concerning 'leadership in and across schools' is discussed, including literature that considers notions of 'effective leadership' and why leadership of schools is considered to be important. Contemporary models of leadership within schools are discussed as well as the wider educational landscape of 'system' leadership across organisations. This leads on to discussing the role of the 'middle leader' and how this level of leadership is increasingly perceived as significant. In exploring the theme of 'leadership development' current models are reviewed including the 'content' of development activities, the learning 'processes' employed and the importance of 'context'. The notion of 'talent management' is then discussed; how might teachers with leadership capacity and skills be identified and developed? Literature around the themes of 'professional growth' is then drawn upon. Key features of professional growth, such as 'role conceptualisation', 'professional identity', 'socialisation' and 'purposeful engagement' are explored. In addition, literature pertinent to the concept of 'self belief' is then discussed. Each section concludes with a brief summary of the relevant literature and key points raised. This review draws upon a range of sources including Government documents, for example, publications and internet sources from the NCTL and the Department for Education and scholarly and professional research publications.

In conducting the literature review, I embarked upon a systematic search. This began with a general internet search of key Government agency websites, particularly the NCTL, using key words such as 'Teaching Schools', 'Specialist Leaders of Education' and 'leadership development'. Publications and research papers on this site provided an opportunity to get up to date with the current policy context, political agenda and to identify leading educationalists in the field. While this approach offered a wealth of 'professional' documentation, I also began a search for 'academic' research using the Birmingham University's online eLibrary, at [www.elibrary.bham.ac.uk](http://www.elibrary.bham.ac.uk) and Google Scholar. I limited my search to papers in the field of education and used the key words, 'school leadership', 'leadership development', 'professional growth', 'professional transformation', 'socialisation', 'identity' and 'self belief'. I also searched Birmingham University's library catalogue for text books as well as research papers. After this initial general search, I read through many of the professional and academic papers that I discovered, identifying and synthesising key themes that were emerging and discarding papers that were not relevant to the aims of my study. Through this reading, I was able to identify further papers and documents that were relevant in the references and bibliographies of these, finding them through the Birmingham University library catalogue, the online eLibrary or on the internet. To keep up to date with new publications, I regularly repeated my searches, drawing my literature review to a close in 2014.

## **2.2 Leadership in and across schools**

While fundamentally this study aims to evaluate the contribution to leadership of a new Government initiative (the role of the SLE), it is important to explore what

effective leadership is perceived to be, why it is thought to be important and what contemporary leadership looks like in and across schools in England today.

### 2.2.1 Effective leadership in education

In terms of what a successful leader might look like in a school, there are many typologies to draw upon and there is a plethora of information available from the NCTL. Day et al. (2010) offer eight key 'dimensions' of successful leadership, suggesting that effective leaders:

- *define their values and vision to raise expectations, set direction and build trust;*
- *reshape the conditions for teaching and learning;*
- *restructure parts of the organisation and redesign leadership roles and responsibilities;*
- *enrich the curriculum;*
- *enhance teacher quality;*
- *enhance the quality of teaching and learning;*
- *build collaboration internally;*
- *build strong relationships outside the school community (p4).*

Similarly, Barber et al. (2010) also offer a list of practices that they argue 'effective leaders share' derived from a review of education systems across eight countries.

These are:

- *building a shared visions and sense of purpose;*
- *setting high expectations for performance;*
- *role modelling behaviours and practices;*
- *designing and managing the teaching and learning program;*
- *establishing effective teams within the school staff and distributing leadership among the school staff;*
- *understanding and developing people;*
- *protecting teachers from issues which would distract them from their work;*
- *establishing school routines and norms for behaviours;*
- *monitoring performance;*
- *connecting the school to parents and the community and*
- *recognising and rewarding achievement (p6).*

It can be seen that there are some features common to both lists. Broadly, these include: sharing a vision; improving teaching and learning; managing the organisation; building effective teams; staff professional development and developing the wider community. These key features are also noted by others. For example, the NCSL (2007) state 'building vision and setting direction' as a 'core task' of school leaders, as well as 'understanding and developing people' and 'managing the teaching and learning programme' (p6). Bush (2008) also suggests that 'vision is increasingly regarded as an essential component of effective leadership' (p3). Notably, the typologies described above include both 'leadership' activities such as vision building and 'management' type activities such as organising teaching and learning and monitoring performance. This highlights a shared perception that successful leadership goes hand in hand with good management of the organisation. Bush (2008) suggests that 'leadership and management are to be given equal prominence if schools and colleges are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives' (p4).

As well as key practices demonstrated by effective leaders, Day et al. (2010) also suggest that head teachers' own values and 'personal traits' are key to their effectiveness, claiming that 'successful heads improve pupil outcomes through who they are – their values, virtues, dispositions, attributes and competencies – as well as what they do' (p2). They continue to suggest that successful heads have a 'strong sense of moral responsibility and a belief in equal opportunities' with a 'passion for learning and achievement' (p7). Barber et al. (2010) also list a number of 'beliefs, attitudes and personal attributes' which they assert successful leaders possess, including being 'self-aware and able to learn'. They draw upon the work

of Leithwood et al. (2007) and suggest that 'a small handful of personal traits explain a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness' (p9) and that it is crucial to 'attract and select' those with the right personal qualities for the 'overall leadership capacity of the system' (Barber et al. 2010, p9). Bush and Middlewood (2005) also suggest that 'leadership should be grounded in firm personal and professional values' (p4). Two personal traits that appear to be key are those of 'passion' and a sense of 'moral purpose'. With regard to 'passion', in earlier research, Day (2008) suggests that it 'is not a luxury, a frill or a quality possessed by just a few head teachers', but that it is in fact 'essential to all successful leadership' (p77). In his study of ten successful head teachers he asserts that 'passion was associated with enthusiasm for achievement, caring, collaboration, commitment, trust, inclusivity and courage'. Highlighting its importance, Davies (2008) suggests that 'Passionate leadership is about energy, commitment, a belief that every child can learn, a concern with social justice and the optimism that we can make a difference' (p1). Southworth (2008) describes this concern with social justice as a 'moral purpose' (p155), where effective leaders are 'professionally and personally concerned to make a difference to children and the young people in their care...' (p155). He continues to suggest that a 'leader's values and passion are the fuels which sustain them' (p167). The NCSL (2007) also suggest a sense of moral purpose is vital, describing how, in their research a 'sense of altruism and vocation' was a strong theme and assert that 'it is the sense of making a difference to children's and young person's lives and learning that comes across' (p12).



It is also suggested that leadership is 'emotional' (Hargreaves, 2008) and that effective leaders utilise this to ensure that 'passionate leadership becomes positive and purposeful...' (p135). In agreement, Crawford (2007) also asserts that 'emotion is inherent to the practice of leadership' (p521) and describes a sense of 'emotional coherence' through which head teachers reflect upon their 'inner emotional experiences of leadership' (p533). This is described by the NCTL (2014b) as 'emotional intelligence', which they conceptualise as a 'sensitive awareness to emotions'. They go on to suggest that emotional intelligence is about:

- *being able to manage our emotions appropriately in whatever context we find ourselves;*
- *being able to manage our relationships with others and control how we deal with others in a variety of situations* (NCTL, 2014b, np).

They suggest that there are 'four' types of emotional intelligence and describe these as 'emotional competencies' which based on the work of Goleman (2000) underpin how leaders perform in their role. These are: self awareness; self management; social awareness and social skills (NCTL, 2014b). In research undertaken for the NCSL, Bullock (2009) suggests that senior leaders and head teachers 'viewed emotional intelligence as the most important qualities for effective school leadership' (p4). Southworth (2008) also identifies 'emotional intelligence' as a key aspect of effective leadership (p155) and suggests that 'emotional resilience' (p173) might well be another personal characteristic essential for effective leadership.

### **2.2.2 The importance of leadership in schools**

The importance of effective leadership in schools is well documented (Harris and Lambert, 2003; Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Bush 2008, Rhodes et al., 2009;

West-Burnham, 2013). It is argued that the role of leaders within schools is vital for securing the best outcomes for pupils. Bush (2008) suggests:

*‘There is a growing recognition that the quality of leaders, and leadership is critical if schools are to produce the best possible outcomes for their learners, and their stakeholders...’* (pxi).

West-Burnham (2013) also comments that ‘it is now a matter of high confidence that school leadership, in particular, headship, makes a difference...’ (p23). The current Ofsted framework also expects that successful leaders improve outcomes for children. In making a judgement about leadership and management within a school, the inspection team will focus on ‘how effectively leadership and management at all levels promote improved teaching’ (Ofsted, 2014, np). The framework makes explicit what Ofsted perceive to be effective leaders, identifying key elements that will be looked for during an inspection. These are the extent to which leaders and managers:

- *‘demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and high expectations of all pupils and teachers;*
  - *improve the school and develop its capacity for sustained improvement by developing high quality teaching, leadership capacity and high professional standards among all staff;*
  - *ensure that all teaching staff benefit from appropriate professional development and that performance is rigorously managed;*
  - *accurately evaluate the school’s strengths and weaknesses and use their findings to promote improvement;*
  - *provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential and make progress in their learning, and promotes their good behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;*
  - *promote pupils’ learning and progress in literacy;*
  - *engage parents in supporting pupils’ achievement, behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;*
  - *take steps to promote the safety of all pupils and ensure that they are safe in school’*
- (Ofsted, 2014, np).

This Ofsted framework illustrates the perception that school leaders are instrumental in achieving high outcomes for pupils through their vision, staff development, high quality teaching and learning as well as through managing good behaviour and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural well being of pupils.

Day et al. (2010) also assert that 'successful leaders contribute to improved pupil learning' and suggest that this is achieved through 'a combination of strategies' (p10). For primary head teachers, they list the most 'frequently cited actions or strategies leading to pupil outcomes' as:

- *'encouraging the use of data and research;*
- *improved assessment procedures;*
- *teaching policies and practices;*
- *changes to pupil target setting;*
- *strategic allocation of resources;*
- *providing and allocating resources and*
- *promoting leadership development and CPD'* (p11).

Although they offer a 'percentage' figure for each of these strategies, it is not clear what the figure actually pertains to; it can be assumed that this might be the 'frequency' of which they were reported, so a higher percentage might indicate a more frequent response. If this is the case, the 'use of data and research' attracted a more frequent response of 28%, while 'promoting leadership development and CPD' only 16%.

In addition to the desire to secure the best outcomes for pupils, it is also argued school leaders have a vital role in implementing Government policy. In an interview with Stephen Ball, the General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) suggests that, 'The secretary of state certainly needs heads. They are the linch-pins of the system, and he can't deliver the reforms without the

heads' (Ball, 1990, p67). More recently, Ball (2013) suggests that school leaders are the 'key agents in the reculturing and re-engineering of the school' (p163), continuing to say that, 'the new school leader embodies policy within the institution and enacts the process of reform' (p164). In essence, senior leaders in schools are crucial to the implementation of educational policy, working within the political context of each Government. This is echoed by Macbeath (2008) who suggests that, 'The success of the National Strategies is vouchsafed by the compliance of headteachers, for the most part willingly, and by the imprimatur of Ofsted inspection' (p144).

Barber et al. (2010) also argue that school leadership is 'crucial' to school outcomes (p5). However, they suggest that the importance of leadership in schools is still 'a subject of debate' and assert that this is not the case in 'business, politics, the military and almost every other area of public life' (p5). Similarly, this is echoed by West-Burnham (2013) who comments that leadership in education is 'filtered through historical and cultural norms in a way that may not be the case with other contexts... for example multi-national organisations and the military' (p10). While the research discussed in this chapter does suggest a positive link between effective leadership and improved pupil outcomes, finding concrete evidence of this is more difficult. West-Burnham (2013) asks the question, 'Is there a correlation between the level of activity centred on educational leadership in any system and the comparative levels of performance in that system?' (p10). Bush (2008) also suggests that the 'widespread belief' that leadership is key in 'determining school outcomes is not well supported by hard evidence...' (p7). Zhang and Brundrett

(2010) also comment that it is a 'contested conception that leadership makes a difference to effectiveness' (p154).

### 2.2.3 The landscape of leadership today

There are many models of leadership in literature. Bush (2008), for example, offers nine models of leadership based on the work of Leithwood et al. (1999) and Bush and Glover (2003). These are:

- *managerial, 'based on managing existing activities rather than visioning a better future for the school';*
- *transformational, focusing on the 'commitments and capacities of organisational members';*
- *participative, where the 'decision making processes of the group ought to be the central focus of the group';*
- *interpersonal, emphasising 'the importance of collaboration and interpersonal relationships';*
- *transactional, referring to an 'exchange process' where senior leaders 'hold power in the form of key rewards such as promotion and references';*
- *postmodern, where leaders 'should respect and give attention to, the diverse and individual perspectives of stakeholders' and 'avoid reliance on hierarchy';*
- *moral, with a 'critical focus' on the 'values, beliefs and ethics of the leaders themselves';*
- *instructional, with an 'increasing emphasis on managing teaching and learning' and*
- *contingent, 'recognising the diverse nature of school contexts and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation' (pp12-19).*

However, Day et al. (2010) argue that despite typologies such as these, 'there is no single model for achieving success' (p8). Similar to Bush's (2008) 'contingent' approach, they suggest that head teachers draw on different models, modifying their leadership style and strategies to suit each setting. They claim:

*'The new evidence in our study is that successful heads draw equally on elements of both instructional and transformational leadership. They work intuitively and from experience, tailoring their leadership strategies to their particular school context. Their*

*ability to respond to their context and recognise, acknowledge, understand and attend to the needs and motivations of others defines their levels of success'* (Day et al. 2010, p8).

Lewis and Murphy (2008) identify this as 'responsive' leadership, suggesting that leaders must 'decipher specific contextual clues and indicators in their own environment' (p8) in order to develop an effective leadership strategy.

In England, the concept of 'instructional leadership' is often described as 'learning centred leadership'; the term encapsulates an approach to leadership that focuses on pupil outcomes and, as a consequence, the quality of provision (Macbeath and Dempster, 2010; O'Donoghue and Clarke, 2010; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010). This style of leadership is very much favoured by the NCSL (2007) who assert that school leaders are 'leaders of learning' and, by nature should 'relentlessly' focus on 'all student learning processes and outcomes' as well as 'staff learning and development' (p8). They suggest that learning-centred leaders should 'monitor' what is happening within the school, using observation and data analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses of teachers and students to tailor specific programmes of learning (NCSL, 2007). Southworth (2004) also claims that alongside pupil learning, 'professional learning' should be at the heart of leadership (p146). He describes six levels of learning that include; pupil learning, teacher learning, collaborative staff learning, organisational learning, leadership learning and learning networks (p146). Southworth goes on to suggest that leaders should exert their influence in these areas through 'modelling', 'monitoring' and 'dialogue' (2004, p146). Similarly, in terms of learning centred leadership strategies, Lewis and Murphy (2008) also identify these as three 'powerful tactics' for leaders to utilise (p8).

Lewis and Murphy (2008) continue to suggest that 'distributed' leadership is also a key strategy used to improve pupil results, asserting that 'there is a connection between the increased distribution of leadership roles and responsibilities and the improvement of pupil outcomes' (Lewis and Murphy, 2008, p16). The NCSL (2007) support this view suggesting that distributed leadership 'does make a difference to school and pupil performance' and is essential if 'schools are to be places where pools of talent are created and from which tomorrow's school leaders can be drawn' (p9). However, Lumby (2013) warns that to claim distributed leadership opens up opportunities for staff and empowers them is 'dubious' (p582). She asserts that while arguments widely offered in the literature suggest 'making use of a greater pool of expertise' or 'offering opportunities for job enrichment', she offers a more critical interpretation where teachers 'are freely undertaking an ever-increasing workload' (p587). She continues to suggest that 'distributed leadership is a profoundly political phenomenon, replete with the uses and abuses of power' (Lumby, 2013, p592). Similarly, Hammersly-Fletcher and Strain (2011) also suggest that such roles 'simply cloak a story of 'smoke and mirrors' in which power still resides at the top' (p882). However, Harris (2013) offers a more balanced perspective, suggesting that while, 'Distributed leadership does not guarantee better performance; it is not a panacea for success, it does not possess any innate good or bad qualities, it is not friend or foe' (p552). She continues to suggest that 'much depends on how leadership is distributed and the intentions behind it' (Harris, 2013, p552).

With the publication of the Government's 'White Paper,' (Department for Education, 2010), in addition to models of leadership within schools, leadership across

organisations is highlighted as an important policy; these include 'federated' and 'system' models of leadership. The 'federated' model is 'characterised by varying degrees of collaboration between schools' where there may be 'shared governing bodies' and 'executive heads overseeing several schools' (NCSL, 2007, p13). 'System' leadership refers to leadership roles 'beyond the boundaries of their own schools' such as 'those that contribute to the wider educational system at a local, regional or national level' (NCSL, 2007, p13). Indeed, Harris (2011) suggests that,

*'it is clear that transforming education systems one school at a time is no longer a feasible or desirable option. The demand for radical and large scale improvement in education is too fierce, too pressing and is shared on an international scale' (p624).*

Congruent to this, the NCTL describe system leadership as 'central' to their vision of a 'self improving system' (NCTL, 2013a, p3). They suggest that:

*'System leaders care about and have the skills and the capacity to work for the successes of other children as well as those in their own school. They collaborate with other leaders to share and develop common solutions, making efficient and effective use of resources to raise standards. They shape thinking, policy and practice so as to have a positive impact on the lives and life chances of children and young people' (p3).*

Fullan (2011) also comments that school leaders taking responsibility outside of their own setting is a 'powerful illustration... in which those at school level become the resources to improve the system as a whole' (p19). The Department for Education's (2010) 'White Paper' expanded the roles of the existing National and Local Leaders of Education in England and introduced the new role of the 'Specialist Leader of Education'. Based on this, the NCTL (2013a) describe the current system leadership roles as:

- *specialist leaders of education (SLEs), who are 'outstanding middle and senior leaders' with a role that focuses on 'developing leadership capacity';*



- *local leaders of education (LLEs) who are 'serving head teachers or principals with at least three years' headship experience' who 'work outside their own school, providing support to another head teacher';*
- *national leaders of education (NLEs) and national support schools (NSSs) are 'outstanding head teachers and principals who use their skills and experience to support other schools. NLEs own schools are outstanding';*
- *national leaders of governance (NLGs) who are 'highly effective chairs of governors who use their skills and experience to support a chair of governors in another school' and*
- *national teaching schools who will 'provide coherent training and development for new and experienced teachers and leaders' (pp4-8).*

While the benefits of a 'self-improving system' are extolled by the NCTL (2013a), it is worth noting that there are voices of concern. For example, Lumby (2009) suggests that there is a 'blind spot' in leadership theory concerned with leadership conducted in 'collaborative situations' (p311) and that there will be ethical tensions in attempting to align the goals of different organisations within a partnership. She suggests that current literature 'ignores the grip of the competitive environment' (Lumby, 2009, p325) and calls for a shift in research from single organisations to partnerships so that this may be addressed. Harris (2012) also highlights the complexity of leading system wide improvement, suggesting that 'Any system is comprised of separate and distinctive parts that co-exist but do not necessarily coalesce' (p396). She suggests that for system wide improvement to be successful, it needs the 'collective will, skill and leadership of those working at all levels in the system, moving in a common direction with the same conviction and shared purpose' (Harris, 2012, p400).

#### **2.2.4 Summary of the literature: Leadership in and across schools**

To summarise the literature relevant to the theme of leadership in and across schools, it has been important to review research concerning effective leadership, why leadership is considered to be important and models of leadership in England today. While many features of effective leadership are offered, these can broadly be summarised as sharing a vision, improving teaching and learning, managing the organisation, building effective teams, staff development and developing the wider community. In addition to such practices, it is also argued that personal traits and qualities in leaders are equally as important (Day et al. 2010; Barber et al. 2010). Among others these qualities include having 'passion', a sense of 'moral purpose' and being 'emotionally intelligent'. The importance of effective leadership in raising pupil outcomes is well documented (Bush, 2008; Rhodes et al. 2009). The new Ofsted (2014) framework also demands that leaders provide a curriculum that 'enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential' (np); holding school leaders responsible for pupils' academic outcomes as well as their moral and social development. Day et al. (2010) offer a number of strategies as to how this might be achieved, such as the interrogation of pupil data. While the perception that effective leadership leads to improved pupil outcomes is widely expressed, it is also noted that direct evidence of the nature of this influence is difficult to find. In terms of models of leadership, several are discussed. However, it is also suggested that head teachers draw upon different models and adapt and change their leadership style and strategies to suit their context. A favoured model currently in England is that of 'learning centred leadership', where there is a focus on pupil learning and their outcomes. In addition to models of leadership within

schools, 'federated' and 'system' leadership models across schools were also explored, as a key feature of current Government policy in England today.

## **2.3 The role of the 'Middle Leader'**

In critically discussing literature concerning the role of the middle leader in primary schools, it is useful to consider why the role is perceived to have become increasingly important in recent years and what the implications for professional development might be as a consequence of this. It is also necessary to explore what the roles and responsibilities of a middle leader are, any tensions there might be within the role and how this may lead to issues around professional identity.

### **2.3.1 Why is the role important?**

Zhang (2013) argues that 'the importance of middle leaders has grown during recent decades' (p189). The NCSL (2006) also suggest that 'the role of the middle leaders is now recognised as being crucial...' (p1) and Briggs (2007) that there has been 'significant changes in roles and responsibilities for those holding middle leadership positions' (p471). Hammersly-Fletcher and Strain (2011) also comment on the role of middle leaders, specifically in primary schools in England and how the role has changed. They suggest that 'the notion of developing middle leaders as a concerted force for change is an attractive one...' (p873). The NCSL (2006) go on to suggest that middle leaders:

*'innovate and lead change, set direction, plan and most importantly, influence and motivate others to follow them. Through their subject or specialism, they lead learning across the whole school...'* (p8).

There are a number of reasons suggested for this increased significance of the role of the middle leader. Firstly, it is reported that pupil numbers in primary schools are growing and primary schools are becoming larger in size (Ward, 2010; Syedain, 2013); the middle leader therefore can be increasingly seen as a key agent facilitating communication and action between senior leadership and the rest of the staff as schools grow. Southworth (2004) argues that as the size of the school increases, 'increasing the power of middle leaders' is something that should be encouraged and planned for (p155). Secondly, as the notion of 'distributed' leadership gains popularity, responsibilities that may traditionally have been viewed as those enacted by the head teacher or other senior leaders may now be undertaken by others, creating new middle leadership roles and responsibilities. Zhang (2013) comments that the distribution of leadership activities has 'given rise to the development of senior management teams, assistant headship and middle leaders with the promotion of leadership at all levels' (p190). The NCSLCS (2010) draw upon Hallinger and Heck's (1999) notion that leaders influence in three ways; directly, indirectly and reciprocally. It is this 'indirect' influence which places the middle leader as a key agent of change. Zhang (2013) recognises this, suggesting that rather than headship 'directly' having an impact on student outcomes, it 'is mediated through middle leaders' (p190). Blandford (2006) echoes this, suggesting that 'Leadership in practice is the achievement of objectives through people' (p4); the middle leader is central in this process. Although their research base was small (four schools), Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) also suggest that it is the teachers 'in the middle' who have a 'pivotal' role (p8). Indeed, in a study by the NCSLCS aimed at improving leadership for 'closing gaps' in achievement, middle leaders were the 'core

participants' (Cordingly et al., 2010, p2). As well as the size of primary schools, a distributed model of leadership and a 'learning-centred' approach, a fourth reason for the significance of middle leadership in schools in the notion of succession planning. Bush and Middlewood (2005) suggest that one advantage for developing middle leaders is that 'it provides a cadre of trained people for advancement to more senior posts... It is a mode of succession planning, a 'grow your own' model of securing a successful future for the school or college' (p12). This is discussed further in **2.4.3**.

Despite the increased significance of the role, Zhang (2013) suggests that while there is a growing body of work that 'describes the career history of head teachers' this is not the case for middle leaders, and drawing on the work of Ribbins (2007), suggests that 'there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding middle leaders' histories' (Zhang, 2013, p191). Zhang (2013) continues to suggest that this has implications for the 'construction of a knowledge base to equip middle leaders with the knowledge and skills to tackle the complexities and demands of their changing role' (p191). Barber et al. (2010) also suggest that 'less is known about good leadership at the 'middle tier'' (p23). They continue to say that there has been 'less interest among researchers and policy makers in understanding and improving performance at this level...' (p23) although they suggest that there now is 'an emerging evidence base' that 'suggests that middle tier leadership has a strong impact on student learning' (p23). While the role of the middle leader appears to have become increasingly significant with a change in emphasis of their roles and responsibilities, Bennett et al. (2003) suggest that in some instances, this may be problematic and the effectiveness of the middle leader can be determined by their

skills and confidence. Furthermore, Barber et al. (2010) suggest that in their international research middle leaders 'have less opportunity for professional development than school leaders' and that this was an area with 'room for improvement' (p24). Where opportunities existed, they suggested that 'discussions with peers', 'opportunities to take on responsibility', 'being identified as a potential leader' and 'formal training' made the greatest impact (pp25-27).

### **2.3.2 What is the role of the middle leader?**

When defining the role of the 'middle leader' in schools in England, a useful place to start is with the NCTL. They describe middle leaders as 'those who have a responsibility for leading a subject, key phase, pastoral care or other aspects of a school's work (NCTL, 2014c, np). Similarly, Gunter (2001) suggests that 'middle management is a label used to position teachers with a subject/department and/or pastoral responsibility... a teacher who has responsibility allowance... in addition to a classroom teacher' (p106). The term 'middle leader' might therefore refer to any member of staff on the leadership or senior management team, responsible for a subject or 'phase' other than the head teacher or deputy. In terms of what they might do or the contributions they might make, Barber et al. (2010) offer five key 'practices'. These are:

- *supporting weaker school leaders;*
- *delivering effective professional development;*
- *managing clusters and lateral learning;*
- *strengthening succession planning and*
- *strengthening and moderating accountability* (pp23-24).

It can be seen here that these practices are very much activities in the 'middle', for example, supporting others and delivering staff training would not be perceived as headship activities or form part of frontline class teaching. One feature to note is

that of 'managing clusters' between schools and 'lateral learning'; a significant element of a 'system' leadership approach. In his study of six middle leaders in secondary schools, Busher (2005) suggests that the 'key functional aspects of a middle leaders' work' are:

- *having a vision for their department;*
- *having the will to use power;*
- *working with staff to implement action;*
- *coordinating and implementing action effectively;*
- *mediating contexts, engaging in arenas;*
- *being a teacher, a successful model for colleagues* (p142).

While some features can be directly compared to those of Barber et al. (2010), such as working with staff and implementing action, others elements suggest a more 'multi-layered' role. Having a 'vision', albeit for a single department or subject might very well be regarded as a more senior leadership activity, while being a good role model in the classroom might demonstrate quality in pedagogic practice rather than leadership skills. Busher (2005) goes on to say that the question of middle leaders 'holding office on the quality of their teaching' lead to some discussion (p147). While some of his participants felt that their leadership role enhanced their teaching because they were 'more aware of the broader educational and social contexts', others felt that it 'made them less effective' due to time spent on leadership and management activities rather than on lesson planning (p147). However, in his final 'Reflections' he concludes that;

*'Middle leaders did not locate themselves as part of the management echelon of the school, identifying themselves instead with the teachers'* (p148).

This leads into the question of professional identity, specifically of middle leaders; are they perceived to be teachers or leaders, by their colleagues and by

themselves? To which group do they feel they belong? The concept of teachers' professional identity is discussed further in section **2.5.2**.

### **2.3.3 Summary of the Literature: The role of the middle leader**

To summarise literature concerned with the role of the middle leader, it is argued that the role has increased in significance in recent years (NCSL, 2006; Briggs, 2007; Zhang, 2013). The reasons for this can be seen as an increase in the size of some primary schools, the increased popularity of a 'distributed' model of leadership and a 'learning-centred' approach, as well as a desire for 'home grown' succession planning and talent management. The changing nature of the role had raised concerns that there needs to be professional development activities specifically tailored for middle leadership roles to equip those staff with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the roles successfully. It is also argued that there has been limited academic research in the biographies and stories of middle leaders and that more needs to be done to add to a 'knowledge base' to further support the role. In terms of responsibilities of the middle leader, these range from having 'vision', delivering professional development activities, managing networks across schools and being a good role model of classroom practice. While the middle leader appears to work in the arena that lies in between and across both senior leadership and the rest of the staff, questions of professional identity are raised.

## **2.4 Leadership development**

To evaluate a new initiative in relation to its contribution to leadership development, it is important to review the literature to establish why it is thought



necessary, what it is (content), how it happens (processes) and where it happens (context). Alongside this, literature exploring the notion of 'talent management' as a means of developing leaders is also reviewed.

#### **2.4.1 Why do we need leadership development?**

Described as a 'demographic time-bomb' (NCSL, 2007, p15), the threat of potential leadership recruitment difficulties in our schools is well documented (NCSL, 2007; Rhodes et al., 2008; Macbeath, 2009; Morrison and Ecclestone, 2011). So too is the importance of effective school leadership, as discussed in section 2.2.1. The current desire for successful school leaders therefore, is great; the NCSL (2007) suggest that 'leadership development and succession planning has never been so important' (p15). In addition to this, the wider political landscape must also be considered. There is no doubt that education is a 'major political issue' (Ball, 2013, p1); Ball (2013) suggests that education is now 'seen as a crucial factor in ensuring economic productivity and competitiveness' and that education policy is increasingly thought about within the 'requirements of globalisation' (2013, p1). Macbeath (2007) also suggests that, 'in a competitive globalised world governments hold schools to account for the moral and social welfare of their charges..., more importantly... is the contribution that schools make to the health and wealth of the economy' (p248). Securing a high quality education system is therefore, a priority of the Government, due in part, Ball (2013) would suggest, as a 'response to the requirements of international economic competition' (p11).

The development of school leaders as part of this strategy is reflected in national policy in England, with the Government making a 'considerable investment in developing school leadership' (NCSL, 2007, p4). More recently in the 'White Paper' (Department for Education, 2010) the Government promises to 'continue with successful leadership development programmes' (p26); Lumby and Muijs (2014) point out that this can be seen to 'align education with the economy's needs' (p535). Historically, this has occurred through the ongoing development of the NCTL and establishment of range of leadership preparation programmes at all levels. Currently, these include the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML), The National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) and the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH); the NPQH was, for some time, mandatory for newly appointed head teachers. Although the effectiveness of such national leadership preparation programmes has been a focus of discussion (Gunter, 2001; Rhodes et al., 2009; Crawford and Earley, 2011; Zhang and Brundrett, 2011) there is a general consensus that some kind of specific leadership preparation, is vital for producing effective leaders (Bush, 2008; Dimmock, 2012). Indeed, Bush (2008) suggests that;

*'Being qualified only for the very different job of classroom teacher is no longer appropriate. If this model was followed for other careers, surgeons would be trained as nurses and pilots as flight attendants. While competence as a teacher is necessary for school leaders, it is certainly not sufficient' (p24).*

Bush (2008) continues to suggest that school headship is a 'specialist occupation' (p26) and that preparation is necessary as a result of four key reasons. These are: the 'expansion' of the role, the 'complexity' of school contexts, as a 'moral

obligation' and because it 'makes a difference' (p26). In congruence, Day (2014) states that there has been an 'addition and accumulation of responsibilities, accountabilities and a number of tasks' (p639) that principals have to manage and lead, suggesting that they must 'possess and apply broader sets of political, intra- and inter-personal and organisational qualities, strategies and skills than ever before' (p639). Describing headship as a 'high-stakes' environment, Dimmock (2012, p133) draws upon the work of Crow (2006) and comments on the 'added significance' (p133) of the head teacher's (principal's) role and the increased 'government and public scrutiny and accountability' (p133) in line with Bush's (2008) notion of the 'expansion' of the role. He also claims that 'Experience alone... may be insufficient to become a successful practising leader' (Dimmock 2012, p136). Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) also suggest that 'Professional development is regarded as an essential component' in developing abilities, including 'leadership skills' (p272). However, in contrast to this, Hunzicker (2012) suggests that 'professional development alone does not provide adequate leadership preparation for teachers' (p267) and that such activities provided only 'peripheral' support to their more informal 'school-embedded' professional experience. Zhang and Brundrett (2010) also assert that 'no external training programme, will on its own, prepare and develop effective leaders without internal and contextual support from within the school' (p155). Congruent to this, Pegg (2007) asserts that 'incorporating the experiential learning of leaders in their schools' (p265) is essential if the gap between knowledge gained through training programmes and day to day leadership practice is to be bridged. While accepting that some kind of leadership development is necessary, whether it is more formal

training courses or in-school experience, it is useful to explore the literature further as to what effective leadership development might look like.

#### **2.4.2 What is leadership development?**

Linksy and Lawrence (2011) suggest that 'Leadership can be learned' (p6); but what is the nature of learning that occurs? 'What' is taught or experienced, 'how' is it delivered and 'where' does it take place? As discussed, it is widely accepted that some kind of specific leadership preparation is necessary to produce effective leaders and to improve schools (NCSL, 2007, Bush, 2008, Rhodes and Brundrett, 2009), but it seems that there is an 'ongoing debate' as to what this might actually be (Bush, 2008, p49). Dimmock (2012) also holds this view, suggesting that there is an 'absence of agreement' about what constitutes 'a valid and necessary preparation and development curriculum' (p134). However, the NCTL currently dominates the landscape of leadership development in England. It is prolific in creating, delivering and licensing leadership development activities and programmes, and is the key facilitator of the Government's policy (NCTL, 2012).

There is a wealth of information available from the NCTL about leadership and leadership development at all levels. This includes class teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders and leaders of federations of schools, in the form of research papers, publications and guidance. In terms of what 'Effective Leadership Development' might look like, the NCSL (2008, p17) draw upon Bush et al.'s (2007) 'Polar models of leadership learning'. They offer the two paradigms of 'traditional leadership learning' versus '21<sup>st</sup> Century leadership learning' (see table

2.1 below), providing a useful framework within which to explore features of leadership development.

*Table 2.1: 'Polar models of leadership learning' (NCSL, 2008, p17) based on Bush et al., (2007).*

<b>Traditional Leadership Learning</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership Learning</b>
Prescribed	Emergent
Standardised	Personalised
Offsite	On site
Classroom-based	Work-based
Content-led	Process-rich
Scale	Depth
Leader Development	Leadership Development

Rather than advocating one approach or the other, the NCSL argue that there may be a place for learning activities from both models, and that a 'continuum between the two' is required for purposeful leadership learning (NCSL, 2008, p17). While they suggest that 'moving development opportunities towards the right hand column will produce better and more sustainable leadership learning' (p17) they are concerned that some content, such as 'specific management skills' (p18) is not always included in programmes. They suggest that those designing leadership development programmes 'need to think carefully about the appropriate point on this continuum for their activities' (NCSL, 2008, p18), implying a tailor-made, mix and match approach developed to meet the specific objectives of the programme and differing needs of the participants is necessary. Dimmock (2012) suggests that a fundamental problem for those designing programmes is the 'weak empirical knowledge base' (p135) of existing leadership practices and their specific effects; in the absence such a 'robust research base' he also suggests that some kind of 'needs analysis' of the participants is necessary (p135).

In promoting a more needs based, personalised approach the NCSL acknowledges that learning occurs through 'on the job experiences', as well as in 'other settings' such as other schools, professional development programmes and in taking on new roles (NCSL, 2004, p16). In this way, the NCSL recognises the need for more formal, specific leadership preparation as suggested by Rhodes and Brundrett (2006), Bush (2008) and Dimmock, (2012), while acknowledging the value and importance of 'job-embedded' learning (Hunzicker, 2012); thus advocating a model somewhere on the continuum in between 'classroom based' and 'work based'. Further research undertaken by Matthews et al., (2011) for the NCSLCS, based on evidence from twenty five schools, would suggest another aspect of the continuum; 'vertical' to 'lateral' development. Matthews et al. (2011) describes the development of leaders within their own school as 'vertical development' while further opportunities beyond the 'home school' as 'lateral development' (p5). They suggest that there is value in both, arguing that while, 'the school is the locus for core leadership development provision' (p6), for aspiring leaders, working in other schools 'can broaden their experience, extend their interpersonal skills and create new and often testing challenges' (p5).

When considering the development of a leadership programme, both Smylie et al. (2005) and Dimmock (2012), suggest that it is necessary to know what the 'knowledge, skills and dispositions' are that make effective leaders; this must be the first question asked (Dimmock, 2012). Dimmock (2012) suggests that knowing what 'type' of leader is required is the first step to identifying the 'future directions' of leadership preparation (p142). He offers 'several pathways' to improved leadership preparation. These are:

- *‘developing a localized knowledge base within cultural contexts;*
- *defining leadership theory;*
- *shifting from passive to active learning;*
- *bridging training and practice;*
- *developing support networks;*
- *participant control*
- *and improving evaluation’* (pp143-145).

Here, similarities can be drawn with the NCSL’s (2008) ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership Learning’ framework, for example, the NCSL’s (2008, p17) ‘emergent’ and ‘personalised’ learning, can be linked to ‘participant control’. However, Dimmock (2012) calls for a well-defined theory of leadership to underpin preparation for it and one that singularly advocates ‘capacity building with the aim of enhancing teachers’ practices and the learning of all students’ (p143). Additionally he also argues for better ‘evaluation’ of programmes for improvement of them, claiming that currently this is ‘inadequate’ (p148).

While it is useful to explore the central themes arising from the NCTL to provide the current context for leadership development activities in England, it is also necessary here to consider different perspectives on the centralisation of leadership development programmes. For example, Tomlinson et al. (2013) suggests that such:

*‘centrally initiated leadership development operates as a mode of symbolic violence, legitimating forms of domination... allowing a centrally coordinated control technology to become misrecognised among organizational leaders as a supportive platform for their own agentic scope as ‘change agents’”* (p94).

He continues to suggest that leaders are willing to ‘collude’ with the goals of centrally initiated leadership programmes as it is ‘perceived as offering them tools to operate and expand their organizational influence... (Tomlinson et al, 2013, p95). An example of this might be the NPQH, the achievement of which Tomlinson

et al. (2013) suggests, 'implicitly provided immediate hard currency and objectified capital' (p92). In congruence with this, Lumby (2014) also comments that there is evidence to suggest that leader development programmes are:

*'designed to remove opposition from decision-making arenas and to persuade others into a pattern of values and actions that support those in power, sometimes openly and sometimes by stealth and with the unconscious compliance of participants'* (p312).

She adds that preparation programmes 'are part of the process of sustaining power relations within education' (Lumby, 2014, p318). Wallace et al. (2011) also make this claim, suggesting that large scale leadership development activities act as 'a political tool for acculturation supporting politically desired educational reform' (pp261-262), continuing to state that:

*'...the National College's provision of leadership development opportunities may create a conduit for policy makers to promote the emergence of a school leadership culture which does not merely endorse government-driven reform. Leaders may proactively operate... as an extension of this conduit for government influence... on the culture and practice of colleagues...'* (p262).

In addition, Lumby and Muijs (2014) suggest that this is perpetuated through policy, suggesting that the 'White Paper' (Department for Education, 2010) 'legitimises or conceals the inherent acceptance of resultant inequalities' (p535). However, with the rise of TSAs nationally, it is also argued that such power relationships may be more complex than this. Simkins (2012) asks the questions:

*'Who controls LMD (leadership and management development) – the government and its agencies? Local authorities? The universities? The profession? Or private organizations and individuals? And what are the levers and mechanisms through which this control is achieved?'* (p632).

He continues to say that it is unclear how the 'balance between the centralization of power in the NCSL... and the devolution of responsibilities to schools for



leading teacher development... will work out' (p635). In the meantime, there is no doubt that the NCTL will continue to have a central, if not controversial, role to play in the delivery of leadership preparation programmes.

#### **2.4.2.1 What is leadership development? 'Content'**

Smylie et al. (2005) suggests that knowledge about what makes leaders effective 'provides goals and content for school leader development' (p140). The NCSL also advocate a place on the continuum somewhere between 'content-led' and 'process-rich' development programmes (NCSL, 2008). It is therefore useful to explore what programme 'content' is believed to be important. In 2004 the NCSL suggested six crucial areas of leadership learning. These are:

- *'leading learning and teaching;*
- *developing self and working with others;*
- *creating the future;*
- *managing the organisation;*
- *strengthening community through collaboration and*
- *securing accountability'* (pp4-15).

Later, they draw upon the typologies of Burgoyne and Williams (2007) to identify key elements they claim should also form part of leadership development activities (NCSL, 2008). Broadly, these encompass gaining knowledge, developing skills, changes in professional behaviour and the ability to motivate others. They are:

- *'knowing that', issues of cognition, the transmission of facts, receiving information, gaining understanding of useful theories;*
- *'knowing how', developing skills, useful management tools and technique;*
- *'behaviour change', doing things differently in the workplace, and*
- *'achieving changes to attitudes and feelings'* (NCSL, 2008, p19).

Bush (2008) provides an overview of the content of leadership development programmes in nine countries and identifies five common topics that he believes

could provide 'the starting point for the creation on an international curriculum' (p39) for leadership development. These are 'instructional leadership', 'law', 'finance', 'managing people' and 'administration'. Bush's (2008) five themes can be aligned with the NCSL's (2004) six areas of leadership learning. For example, 'instructional leadership' is closely aligned with the NCSL's 'leading teaching' and the NCSL's 'managing the organisation', can be seen to encompass Bush's (2008) 'law', 'finance' and 'administration'. While all of Bush's (2008) five themes are included within the NCSL's strategy, in addition, the NCSL also advocates the importance of developing 'vision' (creating the future) and 'strengthening community', 'securing accountability' and a notion of 'developing self'.

While in 2008, Bush offered the 'starting point' for a curriculum for leadership development, more recently the NCTL have produced their own 'leadership curriculum' (table 2.2), suggesting that it 'offers flexible development opportunities to support leaders at every stage of their career' (NCTL, 2013b). This builds upon and includes their six key areas of learning from 2004. For example, 'Leading teaching and learning' is a strand that runs through all levels of the leadership curriculum, reflecting the Government's drive for a 'learning-centred' approach aimed at ensuring high quality teaching and securing improved pupil outcomes. 'Succeeding' at each level and 'leading professional development' also reflects the previous 'developing self and working with others' element, while 'strengthening community' now appears as 'school improvement through effective partnerships'. Here, it can be seen that the notion of developing staff within organisations is embedded in the NCTL leadership curriculum. While previously a lack of professional development opportunities for middle leaders was expressed (Barber

et al. 2010), it can be seen from this overview that provision has been made to develop leaders at the early stages of leadership. The model starts from 'leading a team' to leading an 'organisation' with elements such as 'school improvement through effective partnerships', which appear to lay the foundations for system leadership opportunities across organisations.

*Table 2.2: Themes and content of the NCTL leadership development curriculum (NCTL, 2013, p9).*

Level	Qualification	Modules		
		Theme: educational excellence	Theme: operational management	Theme: strategic leadership
Level 3 Aspiring to lead an organisation	National Professional Qualification for Headship  3 essential and 2 elective modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leading and improving teaching</i></li> <li>• <i>Curriculum development</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading inclusions: achievement for all</i></li> <li>• <i>Closing the gap</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leading an effective school</i></li> <li>• <i>Using data and evidence to improve performance</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading staff and effective teams</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Succeeding in headship</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading change for improvement</i></li> <li>• <i>School improvement through effective partnerships</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading in diverse contexts</i></li> <li>• <i>Free school leadership:</i></li> <li>• <i>Relationships and reputations</i></li> <li>• <i>Freedoms and constraints</i></li> </ul>
Level 2 Leading across and organisation	National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership  2 essential and 2 elective modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Closing the gap</i></li> <li>• <i>Improving the quality of teaching</i></li> <li>• <i>Research and development in teaching</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Effective whole school management</i></li> <li>• <i>School self-evaluation</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading professional development</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Succeeding in senior leadership</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading change for improvement</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading in a diverse system</i></li> <li>• <i>Effective partnership working</i></li> </ul>
Level 3 Leading a team	National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership  2 essential and 1 elective module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leading teaching</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading inclusion</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Managing systems and processes</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading an effective team</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading and developing staff</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Succeeding in middle leadership</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading change for improvement</i></li> <li>• <i>Leading in a diverse system</i></li> </ul>

When considering the content of leadership programmes, Lumby (2014) offers a more critical perspective. She suggests that the content of programmes are 'discriminatory' and that 'leadership models deriving from indigenous peoples and from religions other than Christianity are rarely used' (p314). She suggests that:

*'assumptions about the role of the principal have led to a global development of preparation programmes whose intellectual provenance and value base derive largely from a white, masculine, corporatist culture in Anglophone countries' (p308).*

It might be argued that an emphasis on personalisation rather than standardisation might go some way in offering a more inclusive approach.

To summarise, there is some consensus that leadership learning should primarily include a focus on developing the knowledge and skills that enable leaders to secure high quality teaching and learning in their organisation; this reflects an 'instructional' or 'learning-centred' approach to leadership currently in favour. In addition to 'educational excellence' (NCTL, 2013b), 'management' skills, such as managing systems in school, using data for improvement and leading effective teams are also of key importance. Developing the skills of collaboration and building partnerships are also seen as essential, particularly in a climate where 'lateral' learning and 'system' leadership is increasingly relevant.

#### **2.4.2.2 What is leadership development? 'Processes'**

While it seems there is congruence regarding the desired content of leadership preparation activities, 'how' this is delivered and the 'processes' of learning require some consideration. The NCSL claim that the 'methods' of learning must be carefully matched to the objectives that are to be achieved and the needs of the participants (NCSL, 2008, p18). Smylie et al., (2005) also claim that understanding

the 'processes' of 'how' leaders learn and 'how' they develop skills is the key to assessing the efficacy of development strategies and for selecting them in the future (p140). They describe these as the 'social, psychological and cognitive processes by which capacity for leadership develops' (Smylie et al., 2005, p140).

Bush (2008) makes a case for the need for 'individualised learning' approaches that include: 'facilitation', 'mentoring', 'coaching', 'consultancy' and 'e-learning' (pp42-46); indeed, there is a wealth of literature advocating the use of coaching as a strategy to promote leadership learning (Holmes, 2003; Simkins et al., 2006, Hanbury, 2009; Matthews et al., 2011; Crawford and Earley, 2011). Hallinger and Snidvongs (2005) for example, highlight coaching and 'networks of professional support' as one element of their 'state of the art' leadership development practice and suggest that development that 'fails to incorporate coaching and support... yields few lasting effects' (p9). Rhodes et al. (2009) also comment that 'coaching' along with 'mentoring' and 'shadowing', 'can be seen as 'well-directed aids to transition' to senior leadership (p462). However, while the advantages of coaching and mentoring are extolled in the literature, the importance of a careful match between the coach and coachee for a successful experience is also highlighted (Bush et al., 2007). This has congruence with Rousseau's (1990) 'psychological contract' referring to an 'individual's belief regarding reciprocal obligations' (p390). Here, Rousseau (1990) describes how, while promises are not explicitly made, 'expectations formed during interactions' can 'constitute a psychological contract' (p390). She continues to suggest that these are at the 'relational' level, involving exchanges in for example, loyalty and hard work. Such a 'psychological contract' inevitably exists between a coach and their coachee or SLE and recipient as

expectations about their professional working relationship emerge through their interactions.

However, as well as such 'individualised' approaches, Bush (2008) also argues that there is a place for 'group learning', which can include: 'action learning', 'residential and off-site learning', 'networking and school visits' and developing 'portfolios' (pp46-49). The NCSL also adheres to the view that both individual and group learning opportunities are beneficial, advocating a 'blended learning' approach, describing this as a 'mix of private study, e-learning and face-to-face interaction' (NCSL, 2004, p2). In a recent evaluation of the NPQH programme involving 147 participants, successful elements of the programme were found to be 'school placements', 'coaching' and 'peer networks' (Crawford and Earley, 2011, p110); examples of both individual and group activities. In relation to group activities and learning, Barber et al. (2010) suggest that 'increasing the use of clusters, networks and other lateral learning' was a common theme for developing school leaders (p16). Internationally, they claim that a number of education systems are creating opportunities for 'school leaders to learn from one another' and that these opportunities are 'valued more highly' than other activities (p17).

While Bush (2008) focuses on specific 'strategies' for leadership learning such as coaching and e-learning, Heck (2003) offers the 'process' of socialisation as a 'lens' through which to understand leadership preparation (p239). He asserts that 'Socialization refers to the process through which individuals require the knowledge, skills, norms, values and operating procedures needed to perform an organizational role effectively' (p240). He defines 'professional' socialisation as 'the

process through which one becomes a member of the profession' (for example, formal training) and 'organizational' socialisation where one 'learns the ropes' of an organisation (p240). Zhang and Brundrett (2010) also suggest that 'socialisation theory is providing an increasingly convincing foundation for leadership preparation' (p155); they call for 'greater recognition that professional learning and leadership socialisation are important sources of contextually grounded knowledge' (p157). Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003) suggest that the process of socialisation for school leaders begins in their formative years. Ribbins (2003) asserts that:

*'... the headteachers of the future are socialised into deep-rooted norms and values by the action and interaction of such key agencies as the family, school, peer groups, the local community and other reference groups. These agencies, particularly those that exert their influence during the early years... shape the personality of a future headteacher by generating a conception of self, along with the rudiments of a work style, attitude and outlook' (p63).*

Gronn (1999) suggests that 'formation', the first stage in his framework of leadership lives and careers, refers to the 'preparatory socialisation processes and experiences... from infancy to early adulthood' (p32). While Heck (2003) distinguishes between professional and organisational socialisation, Greenfield (1985a) refers to 'moral' socialisation as the 'attitudes, values and beliefs' necessary for the role and 'technical' socialisation as the 'knowledge and behaviour... associated with role enactment' (p100). In seeking to develop a greater understanding and enhance the process of socialisation for leaders, Crow (2006) builds on the work of Greenfield (1985a, 1985b) suggesting that there are four 'conceptual features' of 'socialisation', demonstrating its complexity. These include:

- *‘Anticipatory socialisation’, which acknowledges that leadership socialisation begins during early teaching experiences;*
- *‘Professional socialisation’, when senior leaders develop ‘context-specific knowledge, skills and dispositions’;*
- *‘Organisational socialisation’, when the senior leader learns ‘how things are done around here’;*
- *‘Personal socialisation’, involving a ‘change of self-identity’* (pp316-318).

In addition, Crow (2004) asserts that the socialisation process is not merely ‘passive’, rather the ‘individual contributes in an active way...’ (p293). He continues that such ‘reciprocal’ socialisation acknowledges ‘the influence and methods used by the socialising organisation’ as well as the ‘characteristics, experiences and values of the individual’ (p293). This is echoed by Zhang (2013) who also suggests that each leader brings their own ‘baggage of life experiences, personality traits and education’ (p193) demonstrating the complexities of socialisation processes. He continues to suggest that socialisation is a ‘two-way interaction between the school-leader and the school situation’ (p194), emphasising the importance of work place learning. While here in the literature, ‘socialisation’ is regarded as a ‘process’ through which leadership is learnt, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) suggests that socialisation experiences, leading to changes in professional behaviour is one aspect of professional growth. This is discussed further in **2.5.2**.

In terms of the ‘processes’ of leadership learning, strategies employed include individual approaches such as coaching, mentoring, shadowing and e-learning. ‘Coaching’ as a process for leadership learning is regarded as a popular and effective strategy (Holmes, 2003; Hanbury, 2009; Matthews et al., 2011; Crawford and Earley, 2011). However, as well as individual approaches, the value of group learning activities such as developing networks or clusters across schools and face to face training days is also recognised. In addition to specific learning



strategies, the 'process' of socialisation is also regarded as important (Heck, 2003; Zhang and Brundrett, 2010).

#### **2.4.2.3 What is leadership development? 'Context'**

Kolb (1984) defines learning as 'a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience' (p38). He continues to say that one characteristic of such 'experiential learning' is that it 'involves transactions between the person and the environment' (p34) and that the term 'experience' has two meanings: 'one subjective and personal' and the other 'objective and environmental' (p35). Eraut (2000) also asserts that 'knowledge gained is constructed in a social context whose influence on what is learned, as well as how it is learned, cannot be denied' (p131). Billet (2008) also argues that, in terms of learning, there is a 'relational interdependence' between the individual and their social context as neither on their own 'are sufficient' (p38). He says that the 'social experience is important for articulating and providing access to work performance requirements' while recognising that it is 'personal factors' that 'shape how workers... learn' (p38). Given such theories of adult learning, notions of experience and the social context of leadership development activities must be considered. Indeed, Barber et al. (2010) suggest that adults learn best when 'development is delivered in context' (p19), congruent to the notions of 'on the job' and 'job-embedded' learning. Extending this further, Barber et al. (2010) argue that it is not only the 'context' that is important, but that leadership learning should happen 'in the context of an improvement objective' (p16). They assert that in Australia, 'leadership development is increasingly seen as a by product of system improvement focused on a specific goal rather than as a separate activity' and quote a participant who

comments: 'our whole purpose is delivering improvement – we're not interested in leadership development for its own sake' (p19). Bush and Middlewood (2005) also suggest that leadership development works best when the learning needs of the staff member are synchronised with the wider context of school development. They suggest that development activities should 'provide a means of meeting the aspirations of the person while also anticipating the needs of the institution' (p12). They continue to say, 'When it works well, the requirements of the individual and the organisation are harmonised to promote learning for all' (p12). Pegg (2007) argues that it is necessary to bring these two aspects in line if leadership development is to be purposeful and successful. She comments:

*'Realising leadership potential requires a greater congruence between the immediate organizational goals to improve teaching in the classroom and the longer term goal of facilitating leadership learning through experience' (p280).*

In terms of the contexts within which leaders work, Barber et al. (2010) offer nine principles of what effective adult learning should look like. They suggest 'adults learn best' in a range of situations and conditions, for example, 'when they are motivated', 'at the edge of their comfort zone' and 'from their peers' (see table 2.3 below). Here, elements based upon theories of adult learning and other research is clear. For example, 'motivation' is identified as a fundamental principle of adult learning (Gallo, 1971; Knowles et al., 2011). Evans (1998) suggests that motivation is 'the impetus that creates inclination towards an activity' (p34); it can be argued that without motivation there is little inclination to engage in leadership development activities. Maslow (2012) suggests that motivated behaviour can be understood through the desire to satisfy basic needs. He suggests that these are: physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow, 2012, p39). It

might be suggested that the desire for high self-esteem and self-actualisation are motivators for participating in leadership development activities. Learning through 'action and experience' with opportunities for 'reflection' can be seen to demonstrate Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, while the requirement for 'effective processes and systems' is in line with Billet's (2008) 'relational interdependence'; for learning to be successful the right social and political conditions must be in place. Learning from role models highlights the influence and importance of working with other senior leaders (Zhang and Brundrett, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2009; Matthews et al., 2011) and participation in the process of socialisation (Heck, 2003). Matthews et al. (2011) also advocate key aspects illustrated by Barber et al. (2010), suggesting that the 'most favoured' approach provides opportunities to practise leadership; they assert, 'The message is clear: you learn to lead by leading' (p51). This is echoed by Macbeath (2007), who also asserts that, 'Opportunities to exercise leadership enhance learning' (p253).

To briefly summarise, adult theories of learning suggest that knowledge is created through experience and that experience is both personal and social. The influence of the social environment in shaping learning is great and therefore consideration should be given to the context in which leadership preparation occurs. It is argued that this 'happens best' where leadership learning is in line with the wider improvement goals of the organisation. Other preferential conditions for learning suggested, among others are, when adults are 'motivated', have the opportunity to learn from 'role models', are pushed 'to the edge of their comfort zone' (Barber et al., 2010, p20) or have the 'opportunities to lead' (Matthews et al., 2011).

Table 2.3: Principles of effective adult learning (Barber et al., 2010, p20) based upon the McKinsey review of 25 theories of adult learning and leadership development.

Leadership development based on principles of effective adult learning		
In a leadership development program this means		
Adults learn best...	This...	Not this...
When they are motivated	<i>Ensure learning matters by building it around strategic projects with measurable impact</i>	<i>"Stand alone training without direct relevance to current challenges"</i>
When they are in charge	<i>Involve candidates in shaping their learning agenda Help them understand why successes and failures occur</i>	<i>"The trainer sets the learning agenda – the learners follow" "Declare success- hide failure"</i>
When they are at the edge of their comfort zone	<i>Stretch people to do more than they think possible</i>	<i>"Do what you know – just better"</i>
Through action and experience	<i>Apply action and reflection learning activities (forum and fieldwork, experiential) Connect learning to previous experience</i>	<i>"It's all in the big book we handed out on Day 1" "I'll tell you something that's completely new to you"</i>
When their learning style is accounted for	<i>Provide activities tailored to different learning preferences (audio, visual, experiential, reflective)</i>	<i>"All learners are similar"</i>
From role models	<i>Engage senior leaders to role-model desired behaviour and support learning</i>	<i>"Learning and training is something for junior leaders and below"</i>
From their peers	<i>Enable a peer community to develop (e.g. via shared forum)</i>	<i>"Isolated individuals"</i>
When supported by effective processes and systems	<i>Provide learning infrastructure: material, portals, course catalogues, policies</i>	<i>"Training without learning infrastructure"</i>
With just-in time support	<i>Install on-the-job mentoring systems to support application of new content</i>	<i>"We teach you everything in one day"</i>

### 2.4.3 Talent management

Barber et al. (2010) quote a 'senior official' in their research as saying; 'Nobody has cracked this yet – nobody knows how to ensure we develop and select the best' (p5). The processes of 'selecting' or 'identifying' possible leadership talent,

‘development’ and ‘succession planning’ can be described as ‘talent management’ (Rhodes et al. 2008; Davies and Davies, 2010). This notion is of keen interest to policy makers and educators alike, in the context of future ‘leadership shortages’ (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006). Rhodes and Brundrett (2006), suggest that as a consequence, the concept of ‘growing your own leaders’ is emerging, however, they continue to say that there is ‘little formal approach to leadership talent identification, succession planning or leadership retention...’ (p270). They continue to suggest that ‘leadership talent identification’ relies largely ‘on the tacit knowledge of head teachers’ (p283) in schools. However, The NCSL’s response to the leadership shortage is that there needs to be more ‘fast tracking’ of teachers with leadership potential (NCSL, 2007, p15) suggesting a more formal and systematic approach than described by Rhodes and Brundrett (2006). They call for the:

- *‘early identification of talent’;*
- *‘mentoring and coaching of these individuals’;*
- *‘providing them with many more opportunities to lead’ (p15).*

They continue to say that this challenge should be dealt with locally and ‘groups of schools’ should work together to develop ‘their talent pools’ (p15). Davies and Davies (2013) also advise that there should be a ‘strategic talent development process in schools’ (p87) rather than an ad hoc approach. Congruent to the NCSL’s three pronged approach to talent management, Barber et al. (2010) also advocate three strategies for talent identification and development as follows:

- *‘The first depends primarily on self-identification by potential leaders and informal mechanisms by which potential leaders are coached and given opportunities to develop within schools;*
- *the second builds on the first by providing opportunities for potential leaders to take courses or join programmes to build their capacity and interest in leadership;*

- *the third approach goes further, proactively guiding the careers of potential leaders so that they gain progressively greater leadership experience through new roles taken on within their schools with guidance and support' (p9).*

They continue to say that the third approach, proactively identifying potential leaders can 'unleash' talent (p10), suggesting that more than three quarters of the principals who took part in their study believe that 'being identified as a potential leader' or 'opportunities to take on leadership responsibility' was a 'major' factor in their professional development (p12). Matthews et al. (2011) suggest a fourth approach in addition to the three described above. They suggest that 'lateral' development provides aspirant leaders with the opportunities to develop skills 'by undertaking work in partner schools' (p23). They continue to say that these schools are often in 'challenging circumstances' and leaders may 'occupy temporary posts' in such schools (p23). In terms of 'effective mechanisms' for the development of talent, Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) suggest that 'empowerment, support, controlled risk taking and accountability' were seen as important by head teachers, while 'a supportive head' was regarded as 'essential' by middle leaders (p280). The role of the head teacher in facilitating talent management is regarded as crucial; the NCSL (2007) assert that the development of leadership talent is a 'major responsibility of heads...' (p16). This is echoed by Davies and Davies (2013) who suggest that talent management is a 'critical factor for schools' (p86) and 'the cornerstone of a strategic leader's success' (p87). Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) also suggest that the role of the head teacher is vital, asserting that 'the type and quality of discourses and experiences encountered by aspirant leaders on a day-to-day basis' resides 'largely in the hands of their head teachers...' (p284). Similarly, Zhang and Brundrett (2010) suggest that it is the responsibility of

head teachers to 'lead and deliver learning at school level and to create a climate where the organisation as a whole can develop' (p157).

While the benefits of creating a pool of talent in a school, or indeed across groups of schools might be desirable, Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) suggest that there are limitations of a 'grow your own' approach. Head teachers in their study suggest that these include: 'lack of time or lack of funding'; teachers being 'unable to cope with a greater workload' and 'fear of a change in professional identity' (p281). For middle leaders, concerns over 'staffing stability, personal circumstances..., staff-room jealousies, lack of confidence, concerns about leaving classroom teaching, lack of advice and fear of extra workload' were articulated as being barriers to promotion (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006, p281).

#### **2.4.4 A summary of the literature: Leadership development**

To summarise briefly, it is well documented that leadership development is seen as vital in producing effective leaders and improved schools; it is therefore, a key strand of national policy in England, with the NCTL being instrumental in creating and delivering leadership development programmes. In terms of frameworks, the NCSL (2008) suggest that leadership development activities fall on a continuum, somewhere between Bush et al.'s (2007) 'polar models of leadership learning'; strands of the continuum include 'off site' to 'on site' and 'classroom based' to 'work based'. It can be seen that there is some consensus as to the 'content' of such programmes, including for example, learning how to manage the organisation and leading teaching and learning (NCSL, 2004, Bush, 2008), but equally, the 'processes' of 'how' this learning occurs is of great importance. The

NCSL (2004) and Bush (2008) suggest a mixed approach of individual and group learning, both on and off-site, using strategies such as coaching, mentoring and e-learning. The process of 'socialisation' is also increasingly seen as important in equipping leaders with the knowledge and skills required to undertake their roles successfully. As well as the content and processes of leadership learning, the context in which it takes place is also argued to be of importance. Theories of adult learning suggest that learning happens through experience; both personal and social. Given the importance of the social context in shaping learning, it is suggested that learning happens best when the needs of the learner are aligned to the aims of the organisation (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007; Barber et al. 2010). Other favourable conditions are the opportunity to learn from role models and the opportunity to lead. Another increasingly popular strand of leadership development is that of 'talent management', which involves the identification and development of leadership potential within and across organisations to create a pool of talent and planned succession for leadership vacancies (Rhodes et al., 2008). This is increasingly regarded as an essential responsibility of head teachers.

## **2.5 Professional growth**

In terms of evaluating the role of the SLE, its contribution to leadership can be explored through the concept of 'professional growth' for both the SLEs and the recipients. Do they have a greater understanding of senior leadership? What, if any, changes that have taken place? Do they see themselves differently? Does the participant perceive themselves to be a 'better' leader for the experience? Have their career aspirations changed? In this section, literature relevant to the



concept of 'professional growth' is explored. When Browne-Ferrigno (2003) conducted her study of eighteen practitioners who participated in a 'principal' preparation programme she identified four key themes:

- *'role conceptualisation of the principalship' (understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a principal);*
- *'initial socialisation into a new community of practice' (changes in professional behaviours);*
- *'role-identity transformation' (a 'mind-set shift') and*
- *'purposeful engagement based on career aspirations' (work towards specific career goals) (pp478-494).*

These four elements form a framework within which the relevant literature can be reviewed: indeed these aspects of change can be seen as a 'lens' through which to view the professional growth of participants of the programme. However, the theme of 'self-belief' was also identified as a relevant theme in the literature when considering the notion of 'professional growth' of aspirant leaders.

### **2.5.1 Role conceptualisation**

Deeper insight and greater understanding of senior leadership roles is regarded as a key aspect of professional growth (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Indeed, it is suggested that knowledge of what the job involves drives the content of leadership preparation programmes (Smylie et al., 2005; Dimmock, 2012). In the context of her study, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) identifies role conceptualisation as 'practitioners understanding about the roles and responsibilities of a school principal' (p479). This can be extended to include all senior leadership posts. In her study she concluded that formal leadership activities 'alone' do not help aspirants 'conceptualise' the work of senior leaders, rather her findings suggest that 'teachers' experiences in informal and formal leadership, both prior to and while participating in the program help to mould their conception...' (p494).

Although their work is primarily concerned with the transformational journey of a doctoral researcher, Wisker et al. (2009) identify the notion of 'learning leaps' referring to when students 'move beyond comfort zones' to 'new ways of seeing'; described as 'aha moments' (p19). These moments refer to crossing a 'threshold concept', based on the work of Meyer and Land (2003, 2006). A 'threshold concept' is described as:

*'... akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. Such a transformed view or landscape may represent how people 'think' in a particular discipline, or how they perceive, apprehend, or experience particular phenomena within that discipline (or more generally)' (Meyer and Land, 2003, p1).*

While utilised by Wisker et al. (2009) to illustrate a different learning journey (to doctoral researcher), it can be argued that such a model can be applied to a greater conceptualisation of senior leadership roles by aspirant leaders as they experience 'learning leaps' in their understanding. Meyer and Land (2003) identify five characteristics of 'threshold concepts'. They are likely to be:

- a) *'Transformative, in that, once understood... is to occasion a significant shift in the perception of a subject...';*
- b) *'Probably irreversible, in that the change of perspective... is unlikely to be forgotten, or will be unlearned only by considerable effort...';*
- c) *'Integrative, that is it exposes the hidden interrelatedness of something...';*
- d) *'Possibly... bounded in that any conceptual space will have terminal frontiers, bordering with thresholds into new conceptual areas';*
- e) *'Potentially (and inherently) troublesome...' (pp5-6).*

Meyer and Land (2003) suggest that the 'troublesomeness' of threshold concepts 'assumes significant pedagogical importance' and ask the question, 'How might we best assist our students to gain understanding of such concepts?' (p7). The same question might well be applied to aspiring leaders on their journey to senior leadership; how might they be best assisted to secure a greater understanding of senior leadership? How best might they be supported to cross key threshold concepts? Crawford and Cowie (2012) also assert that preparation for headship must involve 'transformational learning', developing new frames of references (p176), based on the work of Mezirow (1991). Mezirow (1997) suggests that such 'frames of reference' encompass 'cognitive, conative and emotional components' and are composed of 'habits of mind' and a 'point of view' (p5). Such transformation of 'points of view' are closely aligned to Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) 'mind-set shift' leading to 'role identity transformation' discussed further in **2.5.2**; she suggests that such changes in perspective contribute significantly to identity transformation.

### **2.5.2 Role identity transformation and socialisation**

The professional identity of teachers at various stages of their teaching career has attracted much interest (Gee, 2000; Beijaard et al., 2004; Busher, 2005; Komives et al., 2009; Sutherland et. al., 2010; Pillen et al., 2013). In terms of the professional identity of an aspirant leader, Hall (2004) suggests that '*identity* is probably the most important aspect of leader and career development' (p154). Concerned primarily with middle leaders, Busher (2005) suggests that 'work-related self-identities are central' to their work, (p137) while Beijaard et al. (2004) offer a definition of professional identity, noting four essential features. These are:

- *That it is 'an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences';*
- *That it 'implies both person and context';*
- *It 'consists of sub-identities';*
- *That 'agency is an important element... teachers have to be active in the process of professional development...' (p122).*

The notion of identity as an 'ongoing process' implies that it is changing and dynamic. Beijaard et al. (2004) continue to suggest that the formation of professional identity is not just the answers to the question 'Who am I at this moment?' but also 'Who do I want to become?' (p122) implying a transformation of professional identity as a teacher moves from classroom practitioner to leader. Rhodes (2013) describes such a change in professional identity as 'adopting a changed role with new professional repertoires, changed thinking and behaviour' (p4). In her research, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) describes the notion of 'role-identity transformation' as a change in 'mind-set' of the participants (p488), suggesting that this was the most 'interesting evidence' (p488). Closely aligned to Mezirow's (1997) 'frames of reference', some of her respondents commented that it was as though they had 'a new pair of glasses' or 'a new pair of shoes' (p489), viewing both themselves and their role differently and suddenly understanding the 'magnitude' (p488) of what they had to do as senior leaders; arguably here such a 'mind-set shift' leads to greater role conceptualisation as well as a perceived change in identity. Furthermore, Gronn (1999) suggests that prospective leaders must 'undertake the necessary internal psychological construction... of oneself as reputable and sound...' (p36) to demonstrate to others that they have the capacity to lead. Morrison and Ecclestone (2011) suggest that there is an 'increasing emphasis on programmes designed to reveal the self within the leader, either to enhance transition to leadership or to make existing leaders more effective' (p204). They draw upon the work of West Burnham and Ireson (2005) who suggest that

the 'crux' of leadership development is 'developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be', which involves questions for participants such as 'Who am I?', 'How accurate is your self-image?' 'Do you like yourself?' (Morrison and Ecclestone, 2011, p205).

While the literature suggests that professional identity is complex and changing, Komives et al. (2009) offer a 'leadership identity development' theory, incorporating several stages as a framework for understanding how the identity of a leader is developed. The stages are:

- *'Awareness, becoming aware that leaders are 'out there';*
- *Exploration/Engagement, a period of immersions in group experiences usually to make friends;*
- *Leader Identified, viewing leadership as the actions of a positional leader of a group, an awareness of the hierarchical nature of relationships in groups;*
- *Leadership Differentiated, viewing leadership also as non-positional and as a shared group process;*
- *Generativity, a commitment to developing leadership in others and having a passion for issues or group objectives that the person wants to influence;*
- *Integration/Synthesis, acknowledging the personal capacity for leadership... and claiming the identity as a leader without having to hold a positional role' (p14).*

Komives et al. (2009) suggest the usefulness of such a theory is to 'improve leadership education and practice' (p37). Gronn and Lacey (2004) also explore the notion of 'role transitions' on the journey to leadership and the reconstruction of professional identities. They argue that they identified an 'important developmental leadership need' in the early stages of the journey where aspirant leaders 'position themselves in order to both navigate and manage a range of feelings...'; describing this as a 'positioning space' (p421). They conclude that strategies such as mentoring, have the potential to support 'positioning space access', thus helping

aspiring leaders to navigate through the 'emotional vulnerabilities associated with prospective leadership' (p422). Given the changing nature of identity as a teacher begins and moves towards leadership, Zhang and Brundrett (2011) use the concept of 'personality change' as a lens through which to explore the efficacy of leadership development programmes, in this case those delivered by the NCTL. Although it would seem that a 'transformation of personal characteristics' had been expected, the findings concluded that there was 'little perceived change' (p13). However, a weakness in this research is the limitation of the sample, with only fourteen respondents from six schools, some of whom had never participated on a leadership programme (p10).

As discussed in section **2.4.2.2**, socialisation theory is becoming increasingly important in understanding the journey to senior leadership and developing aspirant leaders (Heck, 2003; Zhang and Brundrett, 2010). Indeed, as Duke (1987) argues, 'Becoming a school leader is an ongoing process of socialisation' (p261). In terms of professional growth, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) relates the notion of socialisation as leading to 'changes in professional behaviour' (p485). Considering Crow's (2006) four conceptual features of socialisation (anticipatory, professional, organisational and personal), one aspect of socialisation that may influence professional behaviour is that of role models and working alongside other leaders. Zhang and Brundrett (2010) claim that in their research, 'some school leaders were enlightened by the influence of the previous head teachers, they felt that such role models were essential...' (p157). Weindling and Dimmock (2006) also suggest that professional socialisation includes 'modelling and social learning'; this learning occurs from observing both 'good and bad models' (p334). Learning from 'role

models' and from 'peers' are highlighted as practices 'when adults learn best' by Barber et al. (2010, p20) while Browne-Ferrigno (2003) also comments that the 'key socialization experience... was working directly with school administrators in real settings' (p486).

However, the process of socialisation as an aspect of identity transformation must also be acknowledged here. Crow (2006) suggests that 'personal' socialisation involves a change of 'self-identity' as new roles are learnt (p318). Congruent to Browne-Ferrigno (2003), he gives the examples of a principal being able identify with the 'larger' view of the school, rather than just the classroom or viewing the role from a 'societal perspective' (p318). He advocates that socialisation into the role must involve an 'openness to change – change in personal identity' (p319). Rhodes and Greenway (2010) also suggest that the process of socialisation is important asserting that 'Transition to headship requires the assimilation of the need to model professional behaviour to that associated with the behaviour of the leader coupled with a mindset-shift to better align with that required and expected of a leader' (p150). In addition, Ribbins (2003) comments that it is those early socialisation experiences that 'shape the personality of a future head teacher by generating a conception of self' (p63).

While Beijaard et al. (2004) highlight the notion of 'context' and Busher (2005) of 'work-related experiences', the notion of a sense of 'belonging' to a social context or work group as important in the formation of professional identities is implicit here. Busher (2005) for example, suggests that the concept of identity comes from

‘where and how people locate themselves within a society or community’ (p137) and goes on to say;

*‘People develop their work-related (professional) self-identities through their interactions with other people in a variety of milieu through time. These identities are grounded in people’s individual histories, personalities and work-related experiences’* (Busher, 2005, p137).

Earlier, Griffiths (1993) suggests that:

*‘The relationship an individual has to groups of people who are important to him or her is the source of self-identity, and so too of the evaluation of the self’* (p312).

Similarly, Wenger’s (1988) ‘social theory of learning’ asserts that the ‘primary focus’ is ‘learning as social participation’ (p4). He continues to suggest that such ‘participation’ encompasses the ‘process of being active participants in practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities’ and describes this as a ‘kind of action’ and a ‘form of belonging’ (p4). He adds that this participation ‘shapes not only what we do, but also who we are...’ (p4). Browne-Ferrigno (2003) applies this theory to becoming a ‘principal’ or senior leader, suggesting that it ‘requires socialization into a new community of practice and assumption of a new role identity’ (p470). Komives et al. (2009) also suggest that ‘leader identity can be viewed as a type of social identity’ and this ‘reflects one’s membership in groups of commonality’ (p24). This has resonance with Heck (2003) who, as noted in **2.4.2.2**, asserts that socialisation is the process whereby one ‘becomes a member of the profession’ (p240).

### **2.5.3 Purposeful engagement and career aspirations**

As discussed, Beijaard et al.’s (2004) notion of professional identity includes the answer to the question, ‘What do I want to become?’ (p122). It would appear that



career aspirations are of key importance to the notion of professional identity and the purposeful engagement with leadership development activities. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) articulates that the findings in her research were ‘surprising’ in that only those with ‘clearly defined post program goals’ demonstrated ‘sustained engagement in their learning’, while those without such career aspirations ‘appeared disinterested in cohort activities’ towards the end of the program (p496). This has resonance with elements of Barber et al.’s (2010) conditions for how adults learn best, where ‘motivation’ is a key feature.

In terms of the journey towards senior leadership, Gronn (1999) advocates a four stage model. The stages he describes are:

- *‘formation’: the period from ‘infancy to early adulthood’, in which experiences begin to shape ‘readiness’ for leadership;*
- *‘accession’: the preparation for leadership;*
- *‘incumbency’: the period when a leader is in post and*
- *‘divestiture’: when leaders ‘let go’ of leadership (pp32-41).*

It is the ‘accession’ phase in Gronn’s (1999) model that is important when considering professional growth of aspirant leaders and in particular engagement with leadership development activities. Gronn (1999) suggests that ‘accession’ refers to a stage where aspirant leaders ‘rehearse or test their capacity to lead’ (p34), demonstrated by ‘public displays’ which he compares to ‘wing-stretching or preening’, with a view to aspirants attracting the attention of ‘role sponsors, gate-keepers and talent spotters’ (p36). Ribbins (2003) also identifies this as an important stage in the journey towards senior leadership, describing it as a phase where teachers ‘look for advancement’ and seek ‘experience in one or more leadership roles’ (p64). He continues to say they develop their ‘capacity’ and test their ‘readiness’ for leadership, comparing and evaluating themselves against

‘existing head teachers and likely rivals’ (p64). For prospective leaders, actively seeking and undertaking leadership development activities during this ‘accession’ stage could be seen as vital for honing skills and demonstrating capabilities.

#### **2.5.4 Self belief**

While not acknowledged as a key theme in Browne-Ferrigno’s (2003) framework for professional growth, the concept of ‘self belief’ is of importance in the literature (Gronn, 1999; Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2004; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Tschannen-Moran and Johnson, 2011; Rhodes, 2012). Rhodes (2012) describes self belief as ‘The beliefs that individuals hold about themselves’ and continues to suggest that such beliefs are ‘potential determinants of success or failure, confidence or disengagement’ (p2). Gronn (1999) asserts that self belief is an ‘important pre-condition for self realisation’ (p36). He describes two parts of self belief; a ‘sense of self efficacy’ (the acceptance of one’s potency, competence and capacity to make a difference to organisational outcomes) and ‘self esteem’ (positive feelings of one’s worth and value) (p36). He demonstrates that both ‘personal efficacy’ and ‘self esteem’ find expression in a sense of ‘self’ and a ‘credible performance’ in the public domain, thus allowing the aspirant to move forward in their leadership career. Bandura (2003) also expresses self efficacy as the ‘beliefs in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments’ (p3), in other words, belief in one’s ability to do the job. In their five stage model of leadership identity development, Komives et al. (2009) suggest that, ‘developing self-confidence’ was a factor of development at each stage (p15). Similarly, Cowie and Crawford (2009) assert that there is a need to foster self belief and self confidence at all stages of the journey to headship.

It can be seen from the literature that a sense of self efficacy and belief in one's ability to do the job could be a vital component in an aspirant leader's journey to senior leadership. Rhodes and Brundrett (2006) assert that 'personal and professional confidence as a barrier to leadership succession is prevalent' (p279). Yet, surprisingly, the notion of 'self belief' is regarded as a 'neglected factor' in this journey (Rhodes, 2012, p1). While the NCSL (2004), offer 'developing self-confidence' as one element of their leadership learning strategy, Rhodes (2012) reports that it has not previously been explored within the context of 'talent management in schools' (p10). He suggests that it is currently unclear whether self belief is 'an intrinsic component of leadership potential and performance' or whether 'the opportunity to perform enables self belief to grow and the subsequent journey to leadership to proceed' (p10).

### **2.5.5 A Summary of the literature: Professional growth**

Based on the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003), the notion of professional growth can be seen as encapsulating the concepts of role conceptualisation, role identity transformation, socialisation and purposeful engagement. Role conceptualisation can be explained as understanding the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Drawing on Meyer and Land's (2003) notion of crossing 'threshold concepts', Wisker et al., (2009) suggest that 'learning leaps' occur during a transformational learning journey, leading to a 'transformed view'. While in their research, this is applied to a doctoral researcher's learning, the same characteristics of crossing threshold concepts could be applied to a greater conceptual understanding of senior leadership roles. It is advocated that identity is a fundamental aspect of a leader's development (Hall, 2004) and that this identity

is a changing one (Beijaard et al., 2004; Busher, 2005; Komives et al., 2009; Rhodes, 2013). Browne-Ferrigno (2003) describes the transformation of identity from teacher practitioner to leader as a 'mind-set shift' in which the individual experiences a change of perspective, congruent with Meyer and Land's (2003) 'transformed view', which it can be suggested would also enhance role conceptualisation. Socialisation experiences, leading to changes in professional behaviours, are also argued to be important in understanding the professional growth of teachers to senior leaders (Duke, 1987; Heck, 2003; Zhang, 2013). Gronn (1999) and Ribbins (2003) suggest that this process begins in the formative years as the personality of future leaders is shaped. Heck (2003) offers the processes of both 'professional' and 'organisational' socialisation as being important to aspirant leaders, while Crow (2006) extends this to include 'anticipatory' and 'personal' socialisation elements. It is also suggested that individuals themselves play an active role in the socialisation process, participating in a reciprocal process (Crow, 2006; Zhang, 2013). In addition to Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) reported 'mind-set shift', the literature suggests that the process of socialisation is also important in shaping professional identities (Ribbins, 2003; Crow, 2006; Rhodes and Greenway, 2010). Furthermore, it is also argued that a sense of 'belonging' to a particular group or 'community' of practice is vital in shaping identity (Wenger, 1988; Griffiths, 1993; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Browne-Ferrigno (2003) suggests that career aspirations are important for purposeful engagement with leadership programme activities; Gronn (1999) proposes a four stage model of the lives of leaders, in which the 'accession' stage refers to a time of preparation for leadership during which such activities might be undertaken with a view to becoming a senior leader. Described as a 'neglected' factor (Rhodes,

2012) in the journey to leadership and not included as a key theme by Browne-Ferrigno (2003), 'self belief' is regarded as fundamentally important to an aspirant leader's professional growth (Gronn, 1999; Tschannen-Moran and Gareis; 2004, Rhodes, 2012); the lack of it identified as a barrier to leadership succession (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006).

## CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter critically evaluates the research design of the study and outlines the choices made in terms of methodology, methods and management of the project. Given the aims of the study, the most suitable approach is that of an evaluative case study; the research questions focus on how the role is conceptualised, how the learning takes place, what professional growth might have occurred and how the experience might be improved. The design is structured to ensure that the research questions are addressed and the overall aims of the study are met. To facilitate this, firstly, it is necessary to position the work within a 'wider framework' to demonstrate its purpose and place in the research tradition. It is also necessary to explore the philosophical stance of the researcher. The 'philosophical approach', reflected in the nature of the research questions, underpins the choices that are made throughout the study, including those of methodology, methods and data analysis; it reflects the researcher's understanding and beliefs around the nature of knowledge and truth. Next, the overall 'research strategy' is discussed. Here, the purpose of the study and philosophical stance that underpins it are revisited, the overarching approach is outlined and the strategies that have been selected as the most appropriate are justified. The chosen methodology is then critically discussed, drawing upon the relevant literature and the selected method of data collection (interviews) is then explored. Following this, the management of the project is outlined, including issues around the researchers role, access to respondents, the sample, 'trustworthiness' of data and how the data was analysed.

Ethical issues are then discussed and the chapter concludes with a brief summary of the research design and the key points that are raised.

### 3.2 Wider frameworks

It is important to position this study within the wider context of educational research to fully understand its purpose and the nature of the knowledge it seeks to find. Clarity in what knowledge is sought contributes to the justification of choices made throughout. Gunter and Ribbins (2003) identify six 'knowledge provinces' in the field of school leadership. These are:

- *'Conceptual, concerned with issues of ontology and epistemology, and with conceptual clarification;*
- *Descriptive, concerned with providing a factual report, often with some detail, of one or more aspects of, or factors, relating to leaders, leading and leadership;*
- *Humanistic, concerned with gathering and theorising from the experiences and biographies of those who are leaders and managers and those who are managed and led;*
- *Critical, concerned to reveal and emancipate practitioners from injustice and oppression of established power structures;*
- *Evaluative, concerned to measure the impact of leadership and its effectiveness at micro, meso and macro levels of interaction;*
- *Instrumental, concerned with providing leaders and others with effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational and system level goals'* (p133).

Although at first glance it may be assumed that an 'evaluative case study' might sit well in the 'evaluative' knowledge domain, this study does not seek to 'measure' the impact of leadership and its effectiveness. Rather, it seeks to explore the personal experiences of the SLE deployments for the recipients and the SLEs through the concept of 'professional growth'. This study therefore, is placed firmly in the 'humanistic' province, 'concerned with gathering and theorising from the experiences...' (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003, p133) of the SLEs and their recipients.

Gunter and Ribbins (2003) continue to discuss 'knowledge practice' and 'knowledge processes'. It is useful here to explore the questions that can be asked of practice and the processes of research undertaken in the 'humanistic' domain that further strengthens the case for placing this study here. Of practice, key questions are:

- *How are teachers experiencing leadership in their professional practice?*
- *How have role incumbents themselves experienced leadership at different stages in their careers?*
- *How are professional identities developed and shaped through leadership experiences? (p135).*

These questions have great resonance with this study, focusing on professional identity and how this might be shaped through leadership experiences. In terms of 'researching teacher leadership', and the 'processes' of creating knowledge, Gunter and Ribbins (2003) suggest that in the 'humanistic' province 'case studies of individuals' are primarily used with the gathering of 'qualitative' data through 'biography, observation and interviews' (p136). The use of a case study approach utilising interviews as the key method of data collection, focusing in part, on the notion of 'professional identity' as shaped through leadership preparation experiences, strengthens the case for placing this study here.

### **3.3 Philosophical approach**

It is suggested that the philosophical approach of the researcher underpins the entire study; that it influences everything from the nature of the research questions to the methodology and methods selected and the way in which data is analysed and presented (Thomas, 2009). It is therefore necessary to address this here through exploring the 'ontological' and 'epistemological' positions of the



researcher. Thomas (2009) provides a clear definition and outlines the distinction between the two; 'Ontology is about what you are looking at... Epistemology is about how you look at and find out about these things' (p87). Thomas (2009) continues to suggest that the notion of 'ontology' as a researcher, 'helps us to understand that there are different ways of viewing the world' (p86), whereas 'epistemology' helps us to understand how we 'know' about the world, through questions such as 'What is knowledge and how do we know things?' (Thomas, 2009, p87).

As a researcher I believe that the world is not simply out there (Cohen and Manion, 1994) but that it is 'constructed by each of us in a different way' (Thomas, 2009, p75); that knowledge is subjective, based upon our own experiences of the world. In this sense, my philosophical approach is one of an interpretivist. Thomas (2009) offers the key features of the interpretivist paradigm, suggesting that the researcher contributes to building a framework of multiple realities, using case study among other strategies, to look at participants' perceptions, feelings, ideas and thoughts and is generally qualitative in nature; as Cohen and Manion (1994) suggest, the 'central endeavour' in the interpretivist paradigm is to 'understand the subjective world of the human experience' (p36). In contrast, Thomas (2009) suggests that within the positivist paradigm, the researcher aims to 'predict and explain', uses 'surveys' and 'experiments', looks at 'things that can be quantified and counted' and is generally 'quantitative' (p78). I would suggest the nature of the research questions that underpin this study require a qualitative strategy, focusing on the perceptions, feelings and ideas of the participants, reflecting an interpretivist approach.

### 3.4 Research strategy

Having placed this study within Gunter and Ribbins' (2003) wider framework, it is necessary to outline the overall research strategy here. Denscombe (2010) suggests that a 'strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a specific goal' (p3) and suggests that it should be 'suitable', 'feasible' and 'ethical' (p4). In this section an overview of the project is offered and its 'suitability' is critically evaluated.

Denscombe (2010) argues that strategies should be thought of in terms of how useful and appropriate they are; this requires a clear purpose. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the role of the SLE in terms of its contribution to professional growth in one TSA. The research strategy chosen as most suitable is an 'evaluative case study' and sits within the 'qualitative' paradigm (Robson, 2011). This combines the features of evaluation, 'to assess how effective a programme of activity has been' (Thomas, 2009, p122) with a case study approach, involving 'in-depth research into one case or a small set of cases' (Thomas, 2009, p115). The evaluation aspect of the strategy is necessary to ascertain if and how the SLE role is perceived to promote professional growth and the case study approach allows this to be explored through the voices of individuals and their personal experiences of it, reflecting the researcher's philosophical approach. Strengthening the rationale for this approach, Denscombe (2010) suggests that such a strategy should be used when the purpose of the research is to 'evaluate a new policy and gauge its impact' (p6), as is the aim here. He continues to suggest that it is necessary to 'compare alternate perspectives on a phenomenon' (Denscombe, 2010, p6), advocating the need to secure

‘respondent triangulation’ (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2013). Simons (2009) also asserts that a ‘Qualitative case study values multiple perspectives of stakeholders and participants’ (p4). However, it is important to note that to ‘gauge the impact’ of this new role, is not to evaluate its impact in terms of pupil outcomes, but on the perceived professional growth of individuals. The ‘feasibility’ and ‘ethics’ of the study that Denscombe (2010) suggests should be considered at this stage are addressed in **3.7.2** and **3.8**.

Having outlined the key features of the research strategy, the overarching approach could be described as ‘phenomenology’ (Denscombe, 2010). Denscombe (2010) describes this as approach as ‘an alternative to positivism’ (p93) and that it deals with:

- *‘people’s perceptions or meanings;*
- *people’s attitudes or beliefs and*
- *people’s feelings and emotions* (p94).

He continues to suggest that it is concerned primarily with ‘human experience’ (p94). However, this study diverts from ‘phenomenology’ in that what is offered is an analysis of the findings and not ‘pure’ description (Denscombe, 2010, p97).

### **3.5 Research methodology**

In this section the research methodology is discussed further, including a critical review of wider case study literature, the notion of ‘the case’, the concept of an ‘evaluative’ case study approach and justifications for sources of evidence used.

### **3.5.1 Case study research**

There are many definitions of 'case study' research (Bassey, 1999; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009; Denscombe, 2010; Thomas, 2011). However, rather than a prescribed, neat set of rules, or a universally recognised definition, it would seem that it is more general features that define case study research. Denscombe (2010) suggests researchers 'buy into a set of related ideas and preferences which, when combined, give the approach its distinctive character' (p52). 'Case study' has also been described as an 'umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus on enquiry around an instance' (Adelman et al., 1980, p48). Quite simply, Simons (2009) suggests that 'Case study is a study of the singular, the particular, the unique' (p3). While definitions may differ in the detail, it is possible to draw out a number of key features that can be identified. Yin (2009) for example, suggests that a case study 'investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context' (p18). Similarly, Simons (2009) asserts that 'Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a real-life context' (p21). Denscombe (2010) asserts that its focus should be 'just one instance of the thing that is to be investigated' (p52). To summarise therefore, it seems that the key elements of case study research are that it should be in depth, in context and have a singular focus as the 'case'.

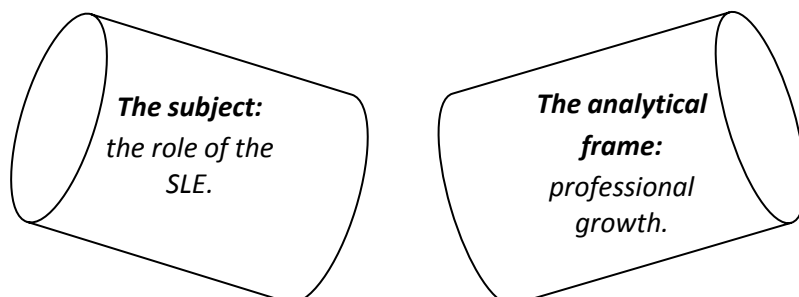
### **3.5.2 The 'case'**

If a case study is 'in depth' and 'in context', what exactly should the focus be? What constitutes a 'case'? Thomas (2009) suggests that this might be, 'a child, a

teacher, a class, a school...' (p115) while Yin (2009) describes the case as a 'contemporary phenomenon' and could be something 'less concrete' such as a community, relationships or decisions made (Yin, 2009, p33). De Vaus (2001) also discusses the concept of the 'case' and suggests that 'time periods' might also be the focus (p220). Indeed, it would seem that a 'case' can be constructed to include just about anything. While this feature of case study offers a flexible approach, it has also attracted criticism: Atkinson and Delamont (1985) claim that is difficult to find a definitive approach to case study research, suggesting that 'the unit of analysis (the case) can, in practice, mean just about anything' (p29). De Vaus (2001) also notes that the case study approach was once described as 'the ugly duckling of research design' (p219). Adelman et al. (1980) suggest that case studies are 'often regarded with suspicion and even hostility' (p47). To counter such criticisms, it is necessary to make sure the 'case' of the study is clear and the design is robust. Denscombe (2010) argues that while the range of 'potential 'cases' is very wide' (p56), the 'case' needs to be 'a fairly self-contained entity' and should have 'fairly distinct boundaries' (p56). Smith (1978) refers to a 'bounded' system, Stake (1995) a 'specific, complex, functioning thing' (p2) and Simons (2009) a 'single unit of analysis' (p29). In evaluation case studies, it is often the focus of the evaluation that becomes the case (Stenhouse, 1988; Simons, 2009). Thomas (2011) suggests that a case is comprised of two parts; a 'subject' and an 'analytical frame' through which to view it (p14). He argues that to constitute a case study, the 'analytical focus must extend beyond mere description' (p15). He offers the visual representation of a two-part capsule, each part needing the other. In this study, the 'case' focuses on the role of SLEs in one TSA viewed through the

analytical framework of professional growth. This study therefore, can be represented using Thomas's (2011) capsule idea (see figure 3.1).

*Figure 3.1 A representation of this study based on Thomas' (2011) 'capsule' notion.*



### 3.5.3 'Evaluative' case study

The aim of the study is to find out whether the new role of the SLE is perceived to have met its intended objectives; does the role 'do what it says on the tin?' The Government is very clear that SLEs are expected to have 'a positive impact... by developing leadership capacity in other schools' (NCTL, 2014a). Developing leadership capacity is therefore the fundamental objective of the role. In earlier documentation, the Government suggested that the SLE afforded 'benefits' for the SLE, the SLE's home school and the recipient school (NCTL, 2012). The 'evaluative' aspect of this study therefore focuses on the key objectives outlined by the Government: the development of leadership capacity and to explore what 'benefits' or otherwise might have been encountered.

The Government purports that the SLE role will develop leadership capacity. Harris (2011) suggests that capacity building 'implies that people take the opportunity to do things differently, to learn new skills and to generate more effective practice' (p627). Similarly, Fullan (2010) asserts;

*‘capacity building concerns competencies, resources and motivation. Individuals and groups are high in capacity if they possess and continue to develop the knowledge and skills’ (p57).*

The notion of ‘developing knowledge and skills’ here is of significance. While the ultimate aim of developing leadership capacity may well be to improve pupil outcomes, it is the development of knowledge and skills, fundamentally the ‘professional growth’ of the participants, which is the key aim of the SLE programme. This core objective shapes the evaluative aspect of this case study; it focuses on the professional growth of individuals rather than measuring changes in pupil outcomes and school performance data.

In addition to this, there are a number of other reasons why the evaluative aspect of the study centres on the professional growth of the participants, rather than improvements in pupil outcomes. Firstly, it is widely regarded that a direct link between leadership development activities and improved pupil outcomes is difficult to determine (Bush et al., 2006, Sammons et al., 2011, Heck and Halinger, 2014, Lumby, 2014). Sammons et al. (2011) suggest that effects of leadership on pupil outcomes are weak and operate ‘indirectly’ through teachers and a ‘favourable school climate’ (p97). Congruent to this, Heck and Halinger (2014) suggest that the relationship between leadership and learning achievement was ‘fully’ mediated through shaping the environment and ‘coordinating the instructional practices of teachers’; they conclude that they ‘discerned no direct effect of leadership on learning’ in any empirical studies (p673). Similarly, Lumby (2014) offers that there is ‘little evidence’ to suggest that ‘learners ultimately benefit from leader preparation programmes’ (p306). Furthermore, the nature of SLE deployments do not lend themselves to evaluation through performance data. For example, while the improvement focus might be to develop aspects of pedagogy in mathematics

alongside the professional development of the curriculum leader, assessment data would not necessarily be available to demonstrate impact. The improvement work may take place over a six week period focusing on pedagogy in, for example, Year 3; published performance data for this cohort would not be available until they were in Year 6 and took their SATs tests. Rather the evaluative aspect must focus on the professional growth of the leader underpinned by the core Government aim of capacity building. However, in this study, where ‘perceptions’ of improved pupil performance were reported, this has been included as part of the consideration of the wider benefits of the role alluded to by the Government (NCTL, 2012) and are noted in both the **Findings** and the **Discussion** chapters.

The notion of ‘evaluative’ case studies in education can be seen to originate in the 1970s. Simons (1980) suggests that before the 1970s it ‘was not common in England’ (p3). She then describes ‘dissatisfaction with existing models of evaluation’ (p4) and, writing in 1980 argues that evaluation efforts should be:

- *‘responsive to the needs and perspectives of differing audiences;*
- *illuminative of the complex organisational teaching and learning processes at issues;*
- *relevant to public and professional decisions forthcoming, and*
- *reported in a language which is accessible to their audiences’* (p5).

Parlett and Hamilton (1977) also adhere to the notion of ‘Evaluation as illumination’ and were critical of ‘experimental’ and more ‘objective methods’ (p4). They suggest that through their ‘illumination’ approach, the ‘attempted measurement of ‘educational products’ is abandoned’, asserting that ‘the innovation is not examined in isolation but in the school context or ‘learning milieu’ (p4). They continue to explain that the aims of ‘illuminative evaluation’ are:



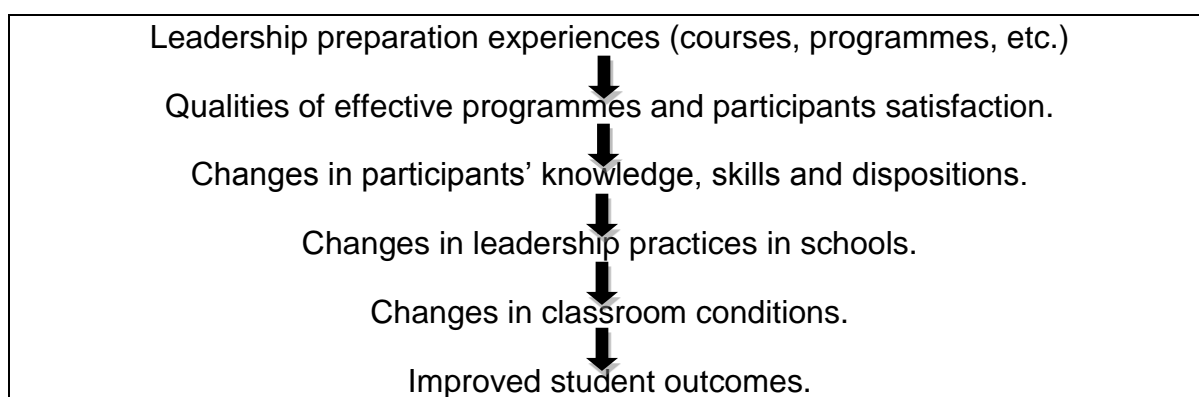
*‘to study the innovatory programme: how it operates; how it is influenced by the various school situations in which it is applied; what those directly concerned regard as its advantages and disadvantages; and how students’ intellectual tasks and academic experiences are most affected’ (p10).*

These key features can be seen to be closely aligned with more contemporary evaluative case study research. Thomas (2009) suggests that contemporary ‘evaluation research is probably the most common kind of research done by professional researchers’ (p122). Stenhouse (1988) asserts that in evaluative case studies, a case is studied ‘with the purpose of providing educational actors or decision makers... with information that will help them to judge the merit and worth of policies...’ (p50). Bassey (1999) also identifies ‘evaluative case study’ as one of three kinds of educational case study which he describes as ‘enquiries which set out to explore some educational programme, system, project or event in order to focus on its worthwhileness’ (p63): in this study the focus is the ‘worthwhileness’ of the SLE programme in relation to meeting its intended outcomes.

While there are a number of evaluation frameworks to choose from (for example, Anderson, 1998; Bush et al., 2006, Crawford and Earley, 2011), this study adopts Bush et al.’s (2006) ‘Framework for the evaluation of leadership programmes’ based on Leithwood and Levin’s (2004) model. The framework focuses specifically on evaluating leadership programmes through different stages of impact; this facilitates an evaluation of the SLE programme against, for example, ‘Changes in participants knowledge, skills and dispositions’ (Bush et al., 2006, p188) and does not necessitate that activities are evaluated against improved pupil outcomes. Bush et al. (2006) advocate a six stage model from ‘Leadership preparation experiences’ to ‘Improved student outcomes’ (p188, see figure 3.2). While the

model exemplifies the relationships between each phase, the authors suggest that ‘an approach that links all phases of the model is difficult’ (p188); rather it is suggested that researchers may focus on the ‘link between one phase and another’. For the purpose of this research, this model is utilised and the second and third stages are explored which facilitate a focus on the profession growth of participants.

*Figure 3.2: Framework for the evaluation of leadership programmes from Bush et al., (2006) p188, adapted from Leithwood and Levin (2004), p6.*



### 3.5.4 Sources of evidence

Yin (2009) suggests that case study evidence may come from six sources; ‘documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artefacts’ (p98) and that one ‘overriding principle’ should be the use of multiple sources of evidence, from ‘two or more’ sources (p98). Denscombe (2010) also argues that the case study design ‘invites and encourages’ the researcher to use a ‘variety of sources’ (p54). However, Bassey (1999) argues that case study research is ‘eclectic’ and encourages researchers to ‘use whatever methods seem to be appropriate and practical’ (p69), advising the researcher to ‘Work out your own methods – from a clear ethical standpoint, and based on your own research questions’. Simons (2009) also asserts that a

researcher should 'Select methods for the potential to inform your research questions' (p34) and Golby (1994) asserts 'Which sources of evidence are sought... are strategic decisions for the researcher to take' (p23). The key aim of the SLE role is to develop leadership capacity; that is to increase the knowledge and skills of SLEs and recipients alike, facilitating professional growth. I would argue that the only source of evidence to capture the perceptions, stories and experiences of professional growth are interviews. While other sources of evidence were considered, it was perceived that they would not offer insight into the personal voices sought. For example, much of the information that 'documentary analysis' might offer is readily available through the NCTL website and indeed this forms part of the literature review. Further documents worthy of analysis might include minutes from SLE meetings or formal reports from deployments. However, while these may have provided the contextual information already offered through the interviews, they would not demonstrate the personal experiences of professional growth vital for this study. The use of published performance data was also rejected for the reasons outlined in **3.5.3**. Indeed, Sammons et al. (2014) suggests that such performance indicators 'provides a relatively narrow perspective' whereas a 'broader picture' can be sought through 'tapping the perspectives of different stakeholders' (p585).

Simons (1980) suggests that 'While case study in education should recognise the relevance of procedures developed in other fields where appropriate... they should also be concerned with... the nature of the particular case under study' (p2). Kemmis (1980) also suggests that it is impossible to define case study research methodologically due to the 'indeterminate nature of the case' and it is the 'case

study worker' who 'makes the case a case' (p117). Stenhouse (1988) argues that the collection of data for case study research involves 'participant or nonparticipant ... interviewing' and 'probably, the collection of documentary evidence' and 'possibly the use of photography, motion pictures or videotape recording...' (p49): the use of 'probably' and 'possibly' indicate that these methods are not essential and are certainly not defining features. Indeed, Simons (2009) argues that 'Combining or mixing methods does not necessarily strengthen validity' (p130). For this study, it is argued that interviews is the only method that will capture the perspectives, feelings and stories of the participants' learning experiences to ensure the research questions are addressed. While this may be seen as a limitation, a robust research design is secured through seeking multiple perspectives (discussed in **3.7.4**) and paying consideration to issues of reliability and validity (**3.7.5**).

### **3.6 Methods: Interviews**

In line with a 'qualitative' approach (Robson, 2011), interviews were selected as the method of data collection for this case study, indeed, Stenhouse (1988) suggests that in evaluative case studies 'interview typically dominates' as the method of choice (p50). Simons (2009) asserts that a key purpose of the interview is to 'document the interviewee's perspective on the topic' (p43). She continues to claim that other purposes include:

*'the active engagement and learning it can promote for interviewer and interviewee in identifying and analysing issues... the inherent flexibility of offers to change direction to pursue emergent issues... the potential for uncovering and representing unobserved feelings and events...'* (p43).

These benefits are also noted by others; Yin (2009) suggests that as a method for case studies, interviews can be 'targeted' and focus 'directly' on the topic (p102). He also comments that they are 'insightful' and provide 'perceived causal inferences and explanations' (p102), which, in this study, provides an opportunity to explore notions of professional growth in depth. Robson (2011) also notes the flexibility to 'modify' a line of enquiry in an interview and read non-verbal clues and nuances in behaviour of the respondent. Underpinning an 'interpretivist' approach, Stake (1995) also suggests that 'the interview is the main road to multiple realities' (p64), allowing for the gathering of 'multiple' views thus strengthening the trustworthiness of the design.

While interviews can be 'structured' (where questions are predetermined) or 'unstructured' (where there are no pre-specified questions) (Thomas, 2009), the method selected here was a 'semi-structured' approach, providing enough structure to ensure the key points are covered, but providing the opportunity to be flexible and to gain more in-depth answers. The interview questions (see Appendices 1 and 2) are loosely based on Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) framework for professional growth, with additional questions included to capture perceptions linked to the wider aims of the study; these were adapted dependent on whether the respondent was an SLE, recipient or other. Interviews undertaken lasted for approximately one hour and were recorded and transcribed for analysis as soon as possible after the event.

A number of disadvantages of the interview method are acknowledged. These include their time consuming nature and the bias of the interviewer (Yin, 2009;

Denscombe, 2010; Robson, 2011); Stenhouse (1988) suggests that 'the spoken transaction becomes initiated and managed by the researcher' (p50). In addition, the 'interviewer effect' is described by Denscombe (2010). He suggests that what people say can 'be affected by the identity of the researcher' (p193), but that this can be mitigated to some extent by adopting a 'cloak of cordiality and receptiveness' (p180).

### **3.7 Management of the project**

In this section, issues pertinent to the management of the project are discussed. These include the role of the researcher, access to participants, the sample, trustworthiness of the design and how the data was analysed.

#### **3.7.1 Researcher's role**

Simons (2009) suggests that in case study research 'you (the researcher) are an inescapable part of the situation you are studying' (p81); it is therefore necessary to acknowledge my position in the research and to both identify and address any issues that may arise as a result. Denscombe (2010) suggests that a researcher should strive to remain passive and neutral at all times. However, Simons (2009) argues that to not 'include an awareness of the influence of our emotions and feelings is just as likely to affect the validity of the research as any other potential threat to validity' (p90). She suggests the need to be 'reflexive' and 'to think about how your actions, values, beliefs, preferences and biases influence the research process and outcome' (p91). This is echoed by Hopkins (2007), who asserts that researchers need to be 'sensitive to contextual ethical issues' and this means:

*'being aware of, sometimes drawing upon and sometimes contesting our own positionalities in terms of our various identities as well as our previous experiences and preferences' (p391).*

In terms of my own 'experiences and preferences', I am a friend and colleague of three of the respondents. I work in one of the schools that form part of the TSA as a middle leader (assistant head teacher). In terms of my professional role therefore, I might be considered an 'insider researcher', defined as 'conducting research with communities or identity groups of which one is a member' (Kanuha, 2000, p440). Issues around insider research and negotiating friendships within empirical studies therefore, must be considered and the relevant literature engaged with. The advantages of insider research are well documented (Bennett, 2003; Hodkinson, 2005; Sprague, 2005). Taylor (2011), drawing on Roseneil (1993) expresses these as:

*'deeper levels of understanding afforded by prior knowledge; knowing the lingo or native speak of field participants and thus being 'empirically literate' (Roseneil, 1993); closer and more regular contact with the field; more detailed consideration of the social actors... making access to, and selection of, research participants easier and better informed; quicker establishment of rapport and trust between researcher and participants; and more open and readily accessible lines of communication' (p6).*

In terms of this study, I was able to draw upon the prior knowledge my professional role offered and utilise the advantages outlined here. Certainly my employment at one of the TSA schools facilitated a deep understanding of the role of middle leadership and ensured access to and purposeful selection of the participants (see **3.7.2** and **3.7.3**). In terms of my own preferences and bias, in undertaking this study, I remained impartial; I had no vested interest or desire to find that the SLE programme was either highly successful or failed to meet its objectives and genuinely approached the research with an open mind. Rather, as

a middle leader, I was keenly interested to explore how leadership development is changing, how schools and colleagues can support each other and the personal experiences of professional growth that engagement with the SLE programme may have facilitated.

Further to outlining the benefits of insider research, Taylor (2011) also draws attention to the criticisms of assuming an insider position; she notes it is claimed that as an insider 'one does not automatically escape the problem of knowledge distortion' and that insider views generate 'their own epistemological problems due to subject/object relationality' (p6). In addition, she comments that the impact of insider friendships on the processes of perception and interpretation is 'grossly under-theorized' (Taylor, 2011, p6). In terms of this research, issues around such subject/object relationality, for example power relationships and existing friendships need to be explored.

As a middle leader employee of a school within the TSA, both the Head and Manager of the TSA might be perceived to have greater power and influence than I in my professional role. In conducting interviews with these respondents I was aware of this and of the biases that they may have as leaders of the TSA; however, I deemed that their viewpoints as key stakeholders were important in securing multiple perspectives within the sample. Miles et al. (2014) suggest that in negotiating ethical issues such as these, honesty and trust between the researcher and the participants is essential and that key questions such as, 'What's my relationship with the people I'm studying? Am I telling the truth? Do we trust each other?' (p62) need to be addressed. I recognised the power difference



in our professional roles, ensured that I adhered to the data collected and sought to establish trust between us. Creating a professional rapport built on trust was essential as the Head of the TSA provided me with the details of all SLEs and the deployments that had taken place. In conducting the interviews in my own school, a similar power relationship between myself and my own head teacher existed; I was aware that in my professional role they were my employer, but I ensured that I adhered to the truth and utilised our existing professional relationship. Two other colleagues were also participants in this study. While we were all assistant head teachers, which mitigated any issues arising from unequal power relationships, I would consider that we were friends. Hanson (2013) suggests that 'to foster greater 'objectivity' in this situation... is to adopt a formulaic approach to the interview, consciously entering a role-play when adopting the role of interviewer...' (p392). Golby (1994) also suggests that as an insider researcher you 'need good procedures for ensuring (as far as possible) an appropriate form of objectivity' (p20). This is congruent to Denscombe's (2010) notion of remaining passive and neutral at all times. However, Taylor (2011) suggests that 'an emotional attachment to one's informants makes objectivity incredibly difficult' (p15) and advocates a more reflexive rather than objective approach. She suggests that the researcher must be 'reflexive and self-conscious in terms of positioning, to be both self-aware and researcher-self-aware' (Taylor, 2011, p9). She continues to suggest that where friendships are involved, 'we must equally value and rely upon our strength of character, goodwill, our gut instincts and emotional intelligence as we do our formal training' (Taylor, 2011, p18). This is echoed by Hennink et al. (2011) who suggest that with any interpretive approach, 'researchers need to use reflexivity throughout the research process' and to be 'explicitly aware of their own

values, self identity or ideologies' (p20). Coghlan (2007) extends this suggesting that researchers should not only be aware of but to 'transcend their own subjectivity' (p341) and that this is achieved through being 'attentive to the data, intelligent in their understanding, reasonable in their judgements and responsible in their actions' (p341). When conducting interviews with my two colleagues, our friendship afforded me greater insight into their professional and personal histories and contexts. While I recognised my own emotional involvement with them, I adopted a professional approach when conducting the interviews and as with others, always adhered to the data that was collected and was mindful of this through my analysis of it. In terms of the other participants, I did not have any pre-existing professional or personal relationships with them. As a middle leader myself, the majority of participants were also middle leaders (both SLEs and recipients), mitigating potential issues arising from unequal power relationships in terms of professional roles. When undertaking this field work in other schools, I was able to adopt the mantle of independent researcher from Birmingham University, rather than assistant head teacher from a local school, while at the same time enjoying the insider knowledge my professional role afforded me.

### **3.7.2 Access**

To ensure the research is 'feasible', Denscombe (2010) suggests that attention must be paid to 'access' and 'time constraints' (p6). Through my role as an assistant head teacher, I was able to secure access to both the SLEs and their recipient schools. The head of the TSA provided the information necessary to begin my empirical work, including contact details of SLEs and recipient schools. Working part time and as a mum of two very young children, I was also realistic

about the time constraints both for myself and the respondents in this study who no doubt have very busy schedules in school. The focus on SLEs and their recipients in one TSA, in close proximity to my own place of employment ensured that I could maximise the time I had available.

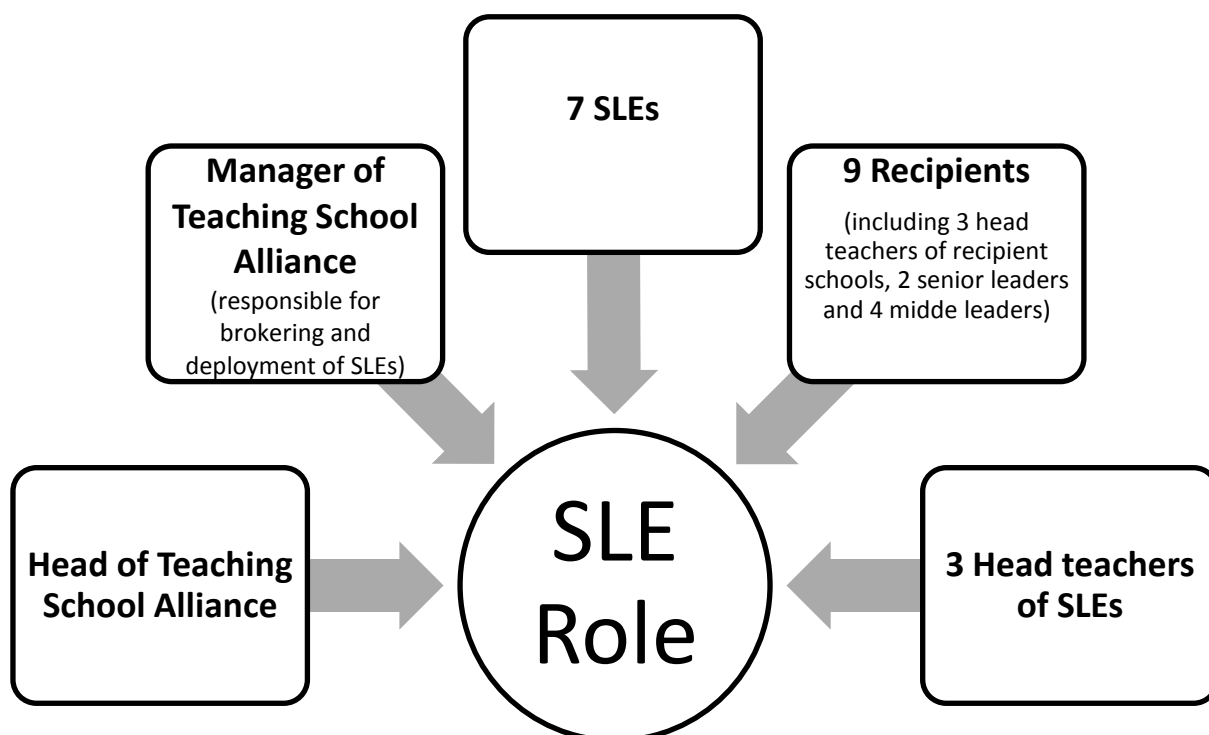
### **3.7.3 Sample**

In the academic year 2011-12, this TSA (one out of only one hundred initially in England) was selected as the case for this study for reasons of feasibility (access and time). Given the number of SLEs who were appointed at that time ( $n=7$ ), all of them were approached to be respondents in the study after a minimum of at least one deployment. In selecting the other participants, a 'purposive' sample was intended (Denscombe, 2010), chosen on the basis of their 'relevance' and 'knowledge' of the topic and to secure multiple perspectives. These included the head and manager of the TSA, head teachers of SLEs, middle and senior leader recipients and the head teachers of recipient schools (see figure 3.3 below).

The interviews took place as soon as possible after the deployments were undertaken, over a period of twelve months from November 2012 to November 2013. Individuals were approached to participate by letter with a short summary of the project (Appendix 3) and a letter of consent (Appendix 4). This initial contact was often followed up by email. At the time, all of the recipient schools where a deployment had occurred were approached to participate in the study. The SLEs' leadership experience ranged from being a subject curriculum leader or an assistant head teacher (middle leader) to a head of school (senior leader). Of the

recipients who were not head teachers, two were deputy head teachers (senior leaders) and four were subject leaders (middle leaders).

*Figure 3.3: Illustration of interviews undertaken to secure multiple perspectives.*



For the purpose of analysing and presenting the findings in **Chapter 4**, a coding system for the participants was developed (see table 3.1). Here, each school is given a number so that it can be seen where participants might work in the same schools, for example, SLEs and the head teachers of their home schools or recipients and their head teachers. The number of the school is represented by the number after the colon: for example, **SLE2:1**, works in school 1.

*Table 3.1: Table to show coding of participants for the purpose of data analysis.*

School	Participant	Code
	Head of TSA	<b>HTSA</b>
	Manager of TSA	<b>MTSA</b>
<b>1</b>	SLE 1	<b>SLE1:1</b>
	SLE 2	<b>SLE2:1</b>
	Head of SLE (a)	<b>HSLEa:1</b>
<b>2</b>	SLE 3	<b>SLE3:2</b>
<b>3</b>	SLE 4	<b>SLE4:3</b>
<b>4</b>	SLE 5	<b>SLE5:4</b>
	Head of SLE (c)	<b>HSLEc:4</b>
<b>5</b>	SLE 6	<b>SLE6:5</b>
	Head of SLE (b)	<b>HSLEb:5</b>
<b>6</b>	SLE 7	<b>SLE7:6</b>
<b>7</b>	Recipient 1 (Head)	<b>R1(h):7</b>
	Recipient 2	<b>R2:7</b>
	Recipient 3	<b>R3:7</b>
<b>8</b>	Recipient 4 (Head)	<b>R4(h):8</b>
	Recipient 5	<b>R5:8</b>
<b>9</b>	Recipient 6	<b>R6:9</b>
<b>10</b>	Recipient 7	<b>R7:10</b>
<b>11</b>	Recipient 8	<b>R8:11</b>
	Recipient 9 (Head)	<b>R9(h):11</b>

### 3.7.4 Data analysis

Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework is described as 'invaluable' for 'conceptualizing qualitative data analysis' (Robson, 2011, p473). More recently, Miles et al. (2014) offer a modified approach, describing qualitative data analysis as an interactive cyclical process with the researcher moving between 'data condensation', 'data display' and 'conclusion drawing/verification' (p12). They advocate that 'data condensation' refers to the process of selecting, simplifying and abstracting the data derived from interviews, 'data display' to the organisation and compression of the information to enable the researcher to draw conclusions and 'conclusion drawing and verification' to the process of noting patterns making

explanations and outlining propositions (Miles et al., 2014, p12). Miles et al. (2014) suggest that 'data condensation' happens continually throughout the project, for example, as the researcher 'decides which conceptual framework, which cases, which research questions and which data collection approaches to choose' (p12). They claim that this continues through the process of 'writing summaries, coding, developing themes, generative categories and writing analytical memos' (Miles et al., 2014, p12). Congruent to this, Brundrett and Rhodes (2013) suggest that becoming familiar with the data is the first and most important step in data analysis: they advocate that this involves taking notes and the identification of emergent themes. The notion of forming first impressions is echoed by Stake (1995) who suggests that 'Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations'. In this study, becoming familiar with the data and forming first impressions occurred as the interviews were undertaken and through their transcription (see Appendix 5 for an example of one interview transcript).

Miles et al. (2014) suggest that as part of 'data condensation' (p12), coding is used to assign meaning to the information compiled through the study. They assert that the process of coding data itself is part of the analysis of it, necessitating 'reflection' and 'interpretation' of the data's meanings (Miles et al., 2014, p72). Saldaña (2013) also describes coding as:

*'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data'* (p3).

In line with Simons' (2009) two processes of 'coding and categorizing' data (p121), Saldaña (2013) continues to describe 'First Cycle' coding as codes assigned to

chunks of data. He advocates up to twenty-five approaches, including descriptive, in-vivo and process coding. In beginning to analyse data from the transcripts in this study, a descriptive approach was utilised, using a word or short phrase to summarize a section or theme in the data. A mnemonic device was used, for example, 'Soc' for 'socialisation' and 'IT' for 'identity transformation'. In line with Brundrett and Rhodes (2013), some themes emerging from the data in this study were expected, but others, such as the theme of 'self belief' were more surprising. In this sense, both 'inductive' (themes raised by participants) and 'deductive' (themes arising from literature) coding was used (Hennink et al., 2011, p217). The themes identified through this process were labelled 'a' to 'm' as they occurred and are presented in **Chapter 4**. Saldaña (2013) suggests that a process of Second Cycle coding then groups these summaries into broader categories or patterns. This is echoed by Stake (1995) who asserts that, 'sometimes we will find significant meaning in a single instance, but usually the important meanings will come from reappearance over and over' (p78), advocating a 'search for patterns' (p78). Strauss and Corbin (1998) identify this as 'conceptualizing' (p121), which involves 'grouping similar items' and reducing large amounts of data into smaller, 'more manageable pieces' (p121). In this instance, initial codes were pulled together into the categories of: conceptualisation of the SLE role; the facilitation of leadership learning opportunities for the participants; professional growth and the wider successes and modifications of the role.

In terms of 'data display' (Miles et al., 2014, p12) and in congruence with Brundrett and Rhodes (2013) the use of matrices were employed (see Appendix 6). Miles et al. (2014) suggests that data 'display' is a 'visual format that presents information

systematically' (p108). This facilitates greater opportunities for 'drawing and verifying conclusions' as the information is displayed 'to permit careful comparisons, detection of differences, noting of patterns and themes, seeing trends, and so on' (Miles et al., 2014, p108). The use of matrices facilitated a comparison of data across groups of participants (for example, SLEs, recipients, head teachers). However, Miles et al. (2014) also note that 'Displays never speak for themselves' (p117) and that accompanying text is also needed. In line with this and as suggested by Brundrett and Rhodes (2013), a cover sheet was devised for each transcript (see Appendix 7).

Brundrett and Rhodes (2013), suggest that the research questions are then returned to and the data is 'brought into analytical contact with both the theoretical models and perspectives' already analysed in the literature review (p150). Miles et al. (2014) also highlight this process, described as 'making conceptual/theoretical coherence', moving from 'the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape' (p292). Here, empirical findings in the study were reviewed in light of key concepts outlined in **Chapter 2** and are discussed fully in **Chapter 5**.

### **3.7.5 Reliability and validity (trustworthiness)**

Guba and Lincoln (1985) coined the phrase 'trustworthiness' and developed their own set of criteria, parallel with the notions of validity they believed was more in line with a qualitative approach. However, more widely, 'trustworthiness' can be seen to refer to the notions of 'reliability' and 'validity' in research design. Golby (1994) suggests that reliability 'refers to consistency in procedures and findings,



that is the degree to which they are replicable' (p22). By its nature, collecting data for a case study must take place 'in its natural context' (Briggs and Coleman, 2007, p143), therefore, a threat to its reliability is the presence of the researcher. To overcome this to as great an extent as possible, Yin (2009) suggests, procedures need to be documented in as much detail as possible and data collected in a systematic and rigorous manner so that someone else could 'in principle, repeat the procedures and arrive at the same results' (p45). To seek reliability in this study, the interview questions are clearly identified, interviews are recorded and transcripts are made available for respondents to verify if requested. Data analysis procedures are also documented.

Alternatively, 'validity' has been described as referring to 'the need for correct and appropriate measures or methods for the construct being examined' (Golby, 1994, p21), for example, using multiple sources of evidence. While multiple sources of evidence are not sought in this case, Simons (2009) suggests that 'triangulation' of perspectives will increase validity. She describes this as 'testing our arguments and perspectives from different angles to generate and strengthen evidence...' (p129). The preference for triangulation is highlighted by others. Adelman et al. (1980) stress that 'at the heart of the intention of the case study worker' is the desire to 'respond to the multiplicity of perspectives present in a social situation' (p55). Stake (1995) too, suggests that whether the evaluation is qualitative or quantitative, 'there is the essentiality of contexts, multiple points of view, and triangulation' (p96). Bassey (1999) suggests that in 'searching for significant features of the case' the researcher can bring 'together data from different sources... or by using different observers' (p76); in this case, it is 'different

observers' that are sought (see figure 3.3). Simons (2009) suggests that over the last thirty years the notion of triangulation 'is less concerned with confirmation or convergence... but with exploring different perspectives and how they do or do not intersect in the particular context' (p131). She suggests that 'acknowledging divergence and seeing from different angles, enables us to pursue interpretations further and deepen understanding to portray a valid picture' (p131). Golby (1994) also asserts that, 'the reason behind triangulation is clear: no one point of view is final, all have their contribution' (p23).

Simons (2009) suggests a further strategy of 'respondent validation'; 'checking the accuracy, adequacy, and fairness of observations, representations and interpretations of experience' (p131). She suggests that these may be participants or other stakeholders. She argues that this is particularly prominent in evaluation research 'where the aspiration is to equalize the relationship between to the researcher and the researched' (p131). In this study, all respondents have to opportunity to verify transcripts of interviews and key stakeholders (for example, the manager of the TSA) had the opportunity to check the study at draft stages for accuracy and fairness.

### **3.8 Ethics**

In selecting an evaluative case study strategy, research ethics need be given careful consideration and adhered to. Underpinned by the notion of 'do no harm', this research strategy facilitated the opportunity to explore the personal experiences of professional growth without undertaking an evaluation of performance of the SLEs based on more quantitative indicators; this would not be

ethical nor would it provide the rich and in-depth data that was sought. Throughout this study, The British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and the Birmingham University ethical guidelines are adhered to. Written consent was secured from all participants to ensure respondents understood the purpose and methods of study, the confidentiality of the interviews, how the data was analysed and stored and how the findings will be used.

### **3.9 Research design summary**

To summarise, this chapter outlines and critically evaluates the research design of the study, focusing on its place within wider research frameworks, along with the philosophical stance of the researcher, the research strategy, methodology, methods, management of the project and ethical issues. Seeking to 'gather and theorise' from the experiences of individuals and concerned with how 'professional identities are shaped', this study sits firmly in the 'humanistic' knowledge province (Gunter and Ribbins, 2003). The desire to explore perceptions of individuals reflects the philosophical stance of the researcher, believing that the world is not 'out there' but is 'constructed by each of us in a different way' (Thomas, 2009, p75). This philosophical approach is reflected in the qualitative nature of the overall research strategy, an evaluative case study, chosen for its 'suitability' (Denscombe, 2010, p5). The case study design provides the opportunity for in-depth empirical research of the SLEs appointed by one TSA and their recipient schools. This approach also facilitates an evaluative aspect to the design in exploring whether the aims of the role have been met; have the SLEs contributed to the leadership development of others? Have they noted professional growth in themselves? Although Yin (2009) suggests that at least two sources of evidence

must be used in a case study, it is argued that for this study, interviews must be the single source of evidence to capture the voices of the participants. However, validity is strengthened through seeking multiple perspectives (Simons, 2009). I was conscious of my role in the research throughout, striving for a robust design and paying close attention to issues of validity and reliability. Data was analysed and verified at the earliest opportunity, following the five steps offered by Brundrett and Rhodes (2013). The BERA and Birmingham University ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to; permission was sought from participants and they were fully informed of how the data was collected, stored and used.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

To present findings from the empirical work undertaken, it is useful to return to the research questions identified in **Chapter 1**; indeed, these structure this chapter. Through the analysis of interview data as described in the **Chapter 3**, key themes were identified, some of which were anticipated and others more unexpected, that are pertinent to each question. During analysis, themes were labelled 'a' to 'm' as they occurred but are explored here in relation to each research question in turn.

The themes are:

- a) opportunities for leadership learning for the SLE;*
- b) opportunities and strategies for leadership learning for recipients;*
- c) nature of SLE deployments;*
- d) expected outcomes of SLE deployments;*
- e) understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLE;*
- f) tensions within the SLE role;*
- g) successes of the SLE role;*
- h) understanding the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership;*
- i) socialisation into senior leadership;*
- j) professional identity change;*
- k) purposeful engagement and career aspirations;*
- l) self belief and*
- m) suggested improvements to the SLE role.*

With regards to the first research question concerning how leadership learning within the SLE deployment is conceptualised in different schools, findings relating to the nature of each deployment are presented as well as those pertinent to the expected outcomes of deployments. Participants' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLE are also explored here through the multiple perspectives of the SLEs, the recipients, head teachers who have SLEs on their own staff and both the head and manager of this TSA. Findings concerned with how the SLE deployment has facilitated leadership learning reveal opportunities

for learning for the SLE and both opportunities and the strategies employed for learning for the recipient; these are presented separately. To explore the nature of any professional growth that may have occurred for both the SLE and the recipient, several themes appear to be relevant. The first is changes in the participants' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership and the identification of key 'learning leaps'; was a 'transformed' viewpoint reported? The second theme explored is the participants' engagement in the process of 'socialisation'; has working alongside other leaders influenced their professional behaviour? Findings concerned with the concept of a 'professional identity change' are then presented; do the participants see themselves or their schools differently? Findings demonstrating the 'motivations' for engagement with the SLE programme for all participants are then explored as its influence on career aspirations and the journey towards senior leadership is reported. The findings relating to this research question conclude with an exploration of the concept of 'self belief' and the role of the SLE; a more unexpected theme that was identified during the analysis of the data. The final research question then asks how the SLE experience can be modified to best achieve its desired outcomes. Here, tensions within and around the SLE deployments are noted alongside more successful features of the role. Suggested improvements to the experience from a range of perspectives are also briefly documented here.

#### **4.2 Research Question 1: How is leadership learning within the SLE deployment conceptualised in different schools?**

In order to explore this research question, relevant themes discussed are: c) the nature of the deployments; d) the expected outcomes of the deployments and e)

an understanding the roles and responsibilities of the SLE. The nature of the deployments in different schools is discussed in terms of how the deployments were established, their duration and frequency of visits. Strategies employed by the SLE are also briefly discussed. The expected outcomes of the deployments are also considered; what leadership learning (if any) was anticipated? What other objectives were desired? Finally, discussion concerning the roles and responsibilities of the SLE from the multiple perspectives of SLEs, head teachers of SLEs, recipients and the manager and head of the TSA, provides further insight into how leadership learning may have been conceptualised.

#### **4.2.1 Theme c) nature of the deployment**

At the time when interviews were undertaken, all SLE participants had completed at least one deployment, with two completing two or more. However, it would appear that there was no template for what deployments might look like or how learning might be conceptualised; the head of the TSA commented that in this respect, there was a *'lack of guidelines'* from the Government (**HTSA**). This uniqueness of deployments it seems is due in part to 'how' or indeed, 'if' the deployment had been requested by the recipient school; the manager of the TSA explains, *'How it works can depend upon how it was requested'* (**MTSA**). Of the experiences of the participants in this study, a usual process was that the recipient school would contact the TSA and request support (three out of five recipient schools). Requests would be about a specific subject in school such as Special Educational Needs (SEN), maths or phonics and might concern either support for the teaching and learning of that subject or the leadership and management of it. Reasons for the recipient schools asking for this support ranged from looking to

improve results, to tweak practice, or as a result of recommendations made by an Ofsted Inspection. One recipient head teacher comments:

*‘...we wanted to unpick and pinch some ideas really... it’s been a general review of Maths rather than just an internal review, looking outside of our school really, that was my intention. I thought we had exhausted our own ideas’ (R4(h):7).*

Another recipient head teacher explains:

*‘... we were inspected and the judgement was requiring improvement... and so, through the TSA we bought into a package of SLE support this year, which was primarily focused on ensuring our phase leader... felt that they were moving us in the right direction’ (R9(h):11).*

In such instances, the recipient school would contact the TSA who would then contact the SLE. The exact nature of the deployment would then evolve as the SLE or SLEs began to work with the school. An alternative model was where the Local Authority (LA) brokered the support of the TSA, rather than the schools requesting it and the SLEs were sent in to support that school. This was the case for two recipient schools in this sample (schools 7 and 10). For one of these schools (school 7) the nature of the deployment changed after the initial SLE deployment, as several of the SLEs were requested again by the school, but were brokered as a result of being part of either LLEs or NLEs and not through the TSA. For the purpose of this study, interview data that referred to work undertaken outside the remit of SLE work has been disregarded.

One head teacher of an SLE described the nature of the deployments as *‘an onion you are unpeeling’*, (HSLEb:5) strengthening the notion that the deployment evolved as it went along; to some extent it could not be planned for. While initially, the Government suggested that SLEs should be available to work in other schools for fifteen days across the year (NCTL, 2012), there is now ‘no-pre-defined time



commitment' (NCTL, 2014a). SLEs themselves have described a range of circumstances where their commitments to each school had been varied, for example: *'two hours a week'* (SLE1:1); *'two half days then follow up discussions'* (SLE6:5); *'quite random... every couple of days...'* (SLE2:1) and more specifically, *'six outings'* (SLE3:2). SLEs also gave examples of working alongside senior leaders in schools (head teachers and deputy head teachers), middle leaders (assistant head teachers and subject leaders) and class teachers. A feature commonly reported by SLEs (n=6) and their head teachers (n=2) was that each deployment was unique, with one head teacher of an SLE suggesting *'it has to be bespoke, not one size fits all'* (HSLEb:5). The manager of the TSA also comments:

*'... everything we do as an alliance is bespoke really. We are not into here's a package... roll that out wherever, it's not about that, it's about 'What does the school need?' because if you are going to move anyone forward you have to start from where they are'* (MTSA).

After two deployments, one SLE also comments, *'two deployments, they were very, very different...two very different models'* (SLE4:3). In addition, a range of strategies used to facilitate learning were also reported. This included pupil work scrutinies, learning walks, modelling and coaching; these are discussed in greater detail in section 4.3.2. It seems that how and why the SLEs were deployed was key in shaping the nature of each unique deployment, requiring, as the head of the TSA describes, for the SLEs to be *'flexible and adaptable'* and ensuring that they have a *'very clear brief'* (HTSA); a *'clear brief'* that can be discussed in terms of the expected outcomes of the deployment.

#### 4.2.2 Theme d) expected outcomes of the deployment

To explore further how leadership learning might be conceptualised within the SLE deployment, it is useful to consider what was expected from the SLEs by the recipient schools. From this sample, the expected outcomes for each deployment were as varied as the number of deployments themselves, but can broadly be seen to focus on raising standards, usually in specific subject areas, through supporting staff and developing the leadership of that subject, with the exception of one instance where the piece of work was described more as a ‘review’ (R7:10) or ‘healthcheck’ of the school (SLE4:3). The expected outcomes can therefore be viewed as twofold; those concerning pupil progress and standards and those concerning the development of leadership skills. In most instances (n=3 schools), the expected outcomes were clear to both the SLE and the recipient school and therefore, shaped the nature of the learning that took place. One SLE comments:

*‘... the outcomes are to support the staff improving their teaching and learning within the classrooms, to support them in looking at the data, levels of children in their own classrooms, to get them to identify the gap in children’s learning and then actually ensuring that they are, or we as a team are supporting them to raise their standards and narrowing the gap for children’ (SLE2:1).*

Another SLE describes how the programme was ‘tailored... with a specific goal in mind.’ (SLE4:3). Recipients too, stated that they were clear in the expected outcomes. One comments:

*‘We were looking for someone to give us insight into what it was we needed to do to embed what we have done and secure that progress throughout KS2’ (R5:8).*

One recipient head teacher also stated the expected objectives for their school as:

*‘... that our children are confidently applying phonics skills... before that is our teachers and teaching assistants effectively teaching phonics in an engaging manner... then underpinning that is X’s confidence as a leader’ (R9(h):11).*

Here, not only does the recipient head teacher clearly articulate their desire to raise standards in phonics, but also expresses their understanding of how improvement in that subject is directly linked to the successful leadership of it. This head teacher continues to say that the purpose of the SLE deployment was to *'work with X, and through X to impact on other staff'* (R9(h):11). Reflecting the bespoke nature of the deployments, another recipient commented that the objectives focused on *'whatever you feel you might need support with'* (R3:7). The various desired outcomes of each recipient school were therefore key in determining what the leadership learning looked like within each deployment. The programme evolved to fit the purpose of the deployment, whether that was specifically to raise standards, to develop leadership skills or both.

This however, seemed to be more problematic where the expected outcomes were not as clear. In this sample, the aims were generally explicit where recipient schools had approached the TSA and requested specific support themselves (schools 8, 9 and 11). They appear less clear to the recipients in a 'done to' model, where the SLEs have been brokered through the TSA by the LA or otherwise and have been 'sent in' (schools 7 and 10). While the SLEs themselves could articulate the key aims of the deployments, the recipients from these two schools comment that the expected outcomes were 'not clear', resulting in a less positive experience. One recipient suggested that the SLEs themselves *'didn't know what their purpose was'* (R2:7) and when asked what the perceived outcome might be another recipient commented, *'if they intended to demoralise staff, they did a good job'* (R7:10).

#### 4.2.3 Theme e) understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLE

As well as how and why the SLE deployments were established and the nature of the expected outcomes, an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLE also emerged as a theme when considering how leadership learning might be conceptualised. All participants expressed their perception of what the role involved and in doing so, specific features of interest could be identified. These include: the 'level' at which SLEs were expected to work; the notion of the role as 'evolving' and 'fluid', and the idea that some kind of 'change' or improvement would be expected from a deployment.

One point to note was an inconsistency in perceptions around the 'level' at which SLEs were expected to be working and where the role fits into the new landscape for education alongside NLEs and the LLEs. The manager of the TSA comments:

*'fundamentally an SLE is part of system leadership... it is about leadership development and working alongside middle and senior leaders to develop their skills' (MTSA).*

Here, the manager is clear that SLE support is targeted at developing senior and middle leadership skills. However, one head teacher of an SLE suggests that while *'NLEs work within leaders and leadership of schools'*, SLEs could work at *'any level'*, depending on their experience and *'skill base'* (HSLEc:4). Another head teacher of an SLE also commented that where an NLE or LLE might go in *'with a very strategic view to support leadership'*, the SLE would have a *'more practical role,'* offering support for a *'particular subject, supporting teachers, co-ordinators, subject leaders...'* (HSLEb:5). Responses therefore highlighted some inconsistency in perceptions around the 'level' at which the SLEs should work, ranging from alongside senior leadership to within the classroom. When asked

whether the role was about developing leadership skills or classroom practice, another head teacher of an SLE replied, *'probably both'* (HSLEa:1). The leadership level at which the SLE was expected to work therefore, seemed dependent upon the aims of the deployment and could be at any level. For one SLE, this was problematic. They comment:

*'I thought the role of the SLE was a bit like the role of NLEs and LLEs... working alongside head teachers... but actually... I realised that it was ... about supporting teachers with planning, so for me it was a little frustrating'* (SLE3:2).

In terms of recipient perceptions, they too were inconsistent. One recipient head teacher commented, *'I didn't know they were supposed to be doing anything other than classroom practice...'* (R1(h):7), whereas another suggests that in their school the SLE worked at a more strategic level, stating, *'it wasn't at classroom level, it was very much to look at the approach'* (R4(h):8).

While there were inconsistencies around the perceptions of the leadership 'level' at which SLEs should work, there were more commonly shared views around the role as 'evolving', 'fluid' in nature, and around the expectation that there would be some kind of 'change' or improvement through a deployment. The role was described as 'evolving' by a number of SLEs (n=3) and the manager of the TSA. This notion of the role as something new and changing, was strengthened by comments such as: *'it is in its infancy'* (SLE6:5); *'the role is so new... there was no script already written'* (SLE2:1); *'it's got a lot of potential... it's very early'* (HSLEc:4) and *'it will develop... in the future'* (HSLEa:1). The manager of the TSA, adds that:

*‘...the role is changing and to an extent actually, the role is being shaped by the schools and by the SLEs themselves’ (MTSA).*

As well as the perception that the role was evolving, the ‘fluid’ nature of the role was also reported, reflecting the bespoke nature of deployments. One SLE suggested, *‘you can’t say... this is the role of the SLE... every situation is different’ (SLE2:1)*. Another commented, *‘different people make the job a different thing’*, continuing to say that the nature of the role is different from *‘deployment to deployment’ (SLE6:5)*.

While the role may be conceptualised differently in different schools and by SLEs themselves, there seemed to be a shared understanding of its fundamental purpose; to facilitate some kind of change or improvement (n=6 SLEs, n=3 HSLEs). One SLE comments, *‘it’s about making impact at the top... to drive forward some kind of change’ (SLE6:5)*. Another describes the key purpose as *‘going beyond your own school environment to support raising of standards of children’s achievement’ (SLE1:1)*. Others comment that, *‘it’s got to be effective’ (SLE3:2)* and that SLEs should be used to *‘improve certain aspects ... that were weak’ (HSLEa:1)*. However, rather than the SLEs going in as a ‘super teacher’ and leading the change themselves, it was also noted that the role of the SLE was perceived more as that of ‘facilitator’. One recipient comments, *‘It’s all about training me up then putting processes into school’ (R6:9)*. The head teacher of an SLE also suggests that SLEs are *‘just the facilitator... so the school take ownership’ (HSLEb:5)*. This notion of SLE as facilitator is discussed further in section 4.3.2.

#### **4.2.4 Summary of findings relating to Research Question 1**

In relation to the question, '*How is leadership learning within the SLE deployment conceptualised in different schools?*' findings suggest that there is no template or standard design of deployment. Each deployment is bespoke and can look different in each school. This can be in part, due to how and why the school requested the support or indeed, if they had requested it at all. The programme of learning evolved as the SLE and the school worked together with participants describing a wide variety in the duration and frequency of visits and a range of strategies used. Expected outcomes broadly focused on raising standards in particular subject areas and developing the leadership of those subjects. These anticipated outcomes were usually clear to both the recipient and the SLE where the schools had requested support themselves, they were less clear in a 'done to' model. Findings suggest that there were inconsistencies in the perceived 'level' at which the SLE was expected to work, leading to confusion and frustration at times. However, there was a general understanding that the role was part of the landscape of 'system' leadership and that it was evolving, different for each school and necessitated some kind of change for improvement, with the SLE perceived to be the 'facilitator' of that change.

#### **4.3 Research Question 2: How has the SLE deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?**

Themes relevant to this research question are: a) opportunities for leadership learning for the SLE and b) the opportunities and strategies for leadership learning for recipients. Due to the different roles and experiences of the SLE and recipients during the deployments, the facilitation of their learning is discussed separately.

#### 4.3.1 Theme a) opportunities for leadership learning for the SLE

During the analysis of interview data, several leadership learning opportunities for the SLE were identified. The first of these was the initial training that was offered by the NCTL when the SLEs were appointed to their posts. This consisted of one full day and additional ‘twilight’ sessions, with other more informal meetings held by the TSA. One SLE explained that the initial training covered ‘*areas*’ such as ‘*developing leaders*’, ‘*potential leadership*’ and ‘*leading and managing organisations*’ with a focus on strategies such as ‘*coaching*’ (SLE2:1). The formal training had a very mixed response amongst this sample of SLEs; three out of seven SLEs were generally positive about the training, while the others, notably SLEs with more leadership experience, felt that some elements were a repetition of previous training and experiences. One SLE, who was a subject leader in their home school and not at the time of interviewing part of that school’s senior management team, responded positively about the training:

*‘I was expecting it to be the usual, ‘Here’s a session on coaching, here’s a session on...’ but actually, it was a lot more in depth than that and again focused on that strategic role... this was definitely about being strategic and about overseeing something more than just one lesson, two lessons or three lessons... I found it to be excellent’* (SLE6:5).

Whereas another SLE, who prior to becoming an SLE was already a deputy head, comments:

*‘I think the people who were training us weren’t as experienced as the people they were training so the pitch wasn’t quite right...’* (SLE4:3)

While the usefulness of the formal training sessions was perceived as varied by the SLEs, other features of the role were suggested as key in facilitating learning. The most commonly noted of these were the ‘opportunities’ to work outside of their



own school contexts. This model of school to school support was viewed extremely positively by all SLEs. As well as the chance to practise and develop leadership skills in different settings, typically, the notion of ‘reciprocal learning’ was reported; *‘You both learn from it’* suggests one SLE (**SLE3:2**). Such reciprocal learning included the opportunity to have professional conversations with colleagues in different contexts and the chance see other ways of doing things. In this sample, the three head teachers who have SLEs employed on their own staff also recognised this as valuable for their school and their leaders. One head teacher comments about their member of staff:

*‘It has given them an official way to go and develop, hone their skills in different settings and different contexts... just going somewhere different helps you make it better at your own school and we have benefitted here...’* (**HSLEb:5**).

Another head teacher suggests that, *‘being in schools, especially schools who have been in difficulty have helped them see how those schools can be supported and improved’* (**HSLEc:4**) with another commenting that a perceived benefit is their SLEs *‘reflecting on management and the management of learning... discussing other schools and other models they have seen’* (**HSLEa:1**).

As well as the opportunities for learning and developing skills through the deployments, five SLEs commented that other opportunities have arisen as a result of being an SLE. One SLE was asked by another TSA to be part of the interview panel to appoint their own SLEs and others have been brokered for school to school support work outside of the TSA. A head teacher of an SLE reports, *‘because they are quite known as an SLE, other schools have asked for*

*their support directly’ (HSLEb:5). One SLE also comments, ‘It is only through being appointed as an SLE that these kind of opportunities came up’ (SLE1:1).*

#### **4.3.2 Theme b) opportunities and strategies for leadership learning for recipients**

In this section, specific strategies employed by the SLEs are discussed as well as how the wider benefits of school to school support facilitated leadership learning.

The manager of the TSA described the strategies employed by the SLEs as ‘*very different in each school’ (MTSA)*. While this would appear to be necessary considering the bespoke nature of deployments, from the interview data, it would seem that some strategies were widely employed. In this sample, strategies more commonly drawn upon were coaching, modelling, joint lesson observations, learning walks, data analysis and pupil work scrutinies. Three recipients identified ‘coaching’ was a key strategy employed to facilitate learning, articulating a sense that their own ideas were valued and that they were instrumental in driving improvement. One comments:

*‘I thought that someone would come in and tell me what to do... it wasn’t like that at all. It was very much like both of us putting an action plan together’ (R8:11).*

Another states:

*‘We made the programme from what I told them together... It’s not them that’s going to be developing maths in this school, it’s going to be me...’ (R6:9).*

Modelling was also regarded as useful for three recipients; this was not necessarily in terms of classroom practice but of leadership activities such as monitoring, learning walks, lesson observations and giving feedback. When asked what had been most beneficial, one recipient replied:

*‘Actually going in and seeing a lesson and also observe them watching a lesson, what they are doing while they observe...’ (R6:9).*

Another commented:

*‘What I found useful as an individual was the monitoring, doing the learning walks... looking at the books and identifying issues... that sort of modelling; what to do and how to tackle it’ (R3:7).*

A third recipient commented on the modelling of ‘difficult conversations’, suggesting:

*‘They modelled that in such a way that showed you can actually move the personal relationship you have got with somebody to professional’ (R1(h):7).*

Two recipients also commented specifically on the helpfulness of looking at and using school performance data with an SLE to identify where their school weaknesses were and how to act upon that knowledge.

As well as specific strategies such as coaching and modelling, the wider, reciprocal benefits of school to school support were also noted as being helpful in facilitating learning. These included: the opportunity to ‘*share practice*’ (R4(h):8, R5:8, R9(h):11); to have ‘*professional conversations*’ (R4(h):8, R5:8, R6:9); the chance to have ‘thinking space’ (R4(h):8, R6:9) and the bespoke nature of the deployment. One recipient commented:

*‘It is better to have someone by your side and go through things that are relevant to you in your school, in your context and your children, I don’t think any courses really can have that same impact’ (R3:7).*

Another recipient head teacher reported that a benefit to their school was that staff were finding out was expected of ‘good’ schools through the SLE work. They comment:

*'It has been good for our staff to hear, actually some of the things we are asking them to do now, we're not asking them to do them because we are in a category, we are asking them because that's what good schools do...'* (R1(h):7).

Another said of working with other schools, *'You are on a win, win really, you can't lose'* (R4(h):8).

As well as the facilitation of learning, one element of the deployments that was perhaps unexpected was, in some instances, the 'emotional' support offered by the SLEs. One recipient comments that while she perceived the outcomes of the deployment weren't met, the SLE was, *'like a knight in shining armour at a very difficult time...'* (R2:7). Another recipient also comments of the role, that as well as *'mentoring'* and *'coaching'* there was, *'some emotional support there'* (R1(h):7).

#### **4.3.3 Summary of findings relating to Research Question 2**

To summarise findings with respect to the question, *'How has the SLE deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?'* it is useful to consider the role of the SLE and the recipient separately due to the differing nature of their experiences of the deployments. The initial training provided by the NCTL for the SLEs had a very mixed response; this it seemed, was largely dependent on the previous leadership experience of the SLE. More commonly noted was the value placed on the opportunity to work outside of their usual settings and contexts. This notion of reciprocal learning was a strong theme and one also highlighted by head teachers of SLEs, who noted the benefits for their own schools. SLEs also commented that the role itself had led to other, wider professional opportunities that they may not otherwise have had. For the recipient, learning was facilitated through a range of strategies such as coaching, modelling, joint lesson

observations, learning walks, data analysis and pupil work scrutinies. The broader features of school to school support were also perceived to be valuable, providing the recipients with the opportunity to share practice and develop professional dialogues with colleagues from other settings. Elements of emotional support provided by the SLE were also commented on.

#### **4.4 Research Question 3: What professional growth may have occurred for the SLE/recipient as a result of the SLE deployment?**

Themes that emerged through the interview data, relevant to this research question are: h) understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership; i) socialisation into senior leadership; j) professional identity change; k) purposeful engagement and career aspirations and l) self belief. The first theme relates to perceptions of senior leadership; does the SLE or the recipient have greater insight into the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders? Is an increased understanding reported? Next, the process of 'socialisation' into senior leadership and 'identity change' are discussed: has working with other, experienced leaders been beneficial for professional growth? Has there been any perceived change regarding professional identity or a 'mind-set shift'? Other themes explored relate to the motivations and reasons for engagement with the programme; has there been any change in career aspirations as a result of the SLE experience? Another theme that emerged was the notion of 'self belief'; do the participants have greater confidence in themselves as senior leaders? For each theme, responses are explored from multiple perspectives.

#### 4.4.1 Theme h) Understanding the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership

Some participants felt there had been little change in their understanding of senior leadership roles. This was reported by two out of seven SLEs, who were already well established leaders in their own school. They described a wealth of experience in supporting colleagues in their own and other schools prior to their SLE post. Of the six recipients who were not already head teachers, three reported little perceived change in their perceptions of senior leadership. This was expressed as being because the deployment was very short, or because the recipients were already established leaders. One comments, *'It was just a very short burst... it wasn't nurturing of leadership in any way'* (R7:10). Another suggests:

*'They confirmed we did know what we were doing and there was nothing they brought to the table that made us think as leaders, 'Ooh, I had never thought of that''*(R2:7).

A head teacher also says of their member of staff who worked with an SLE:

*'They are a talented and experienced member of my senior leadership team so I don't think necessarily it brought their skills on'* (R4(h):8).

While these participants felt there had been little change, other participants expressed quite significant changes in their conceptualisation of senior leadership roles through the SLE experience and were able to articulate key 'learning leaps' that had occurred. Five SLEs perceived that their understanding of senior leadership roles had increased. This learning included: a greater understanding the 'mechanisms' of the school; learning to be more flexible and adaptable; a recognition of the need to support the 'emotional wellbeing' of staff; a greater understanding of 'system' leadership; improvements in managing workload and an improved ability to have 'difficult conversations' and to hold staff to account. One

SLE says the experience had *'certainly'* offered them a greater understanding of senior leadership, explaining that it's not just about the *'teaching and learning,'* it is *'all the other elements that go into it'* (SLE2:1). They continue to say:

*'One of the things I have learnt, probably a big thing, is it can't just come from the top... now I have ideas about what I would do to move a school forward'* (SLE2:1).

Another SLE comments:

*'I have learnt to be a little more relaxed about how the outcomes are got and I think that's an important step for me as a leader... the biggest thing is to be flexible'* (SLE6:5).

Another SLE talks about discovering the importance of the emotional well being of staff and their surprise at learning how vital this was to their leadership role:

*'School leaders can be quite vulnerable actually... sometimes people need building back up, you know, have their confidence restored and actually I wasn't expecting to be doing that...the emotional side of things, how people view themselves, how fragile people are, is one thing that stands out to me... that's been part of the role I wasn't expecting'* (SLE4:3).

As well as the SLEs, all three head teachers of SLEs suggested that their SLEs had an increased understanding of senior leadership. One head teacher suggests that the SLE role contributed to their member of staff having a greater understanding of *'system leadership'* and *'strategic stuff'* (HSLEc:4). Another head commented that their SLE can *'balance their work load better'* (HSLEb:5). The third head teacher says of their SLEs;

*'I have seen evidence that they are better at difficult conversations... they don't think first, 'Oh, the teachers might be upset about this,' they think, 'This could have an impact on the children...'* (HSLEa:1).

Although, when asked about leadership learning, one recipient said, *'I think it's most powerful for them (the SLEs) ... I think they are the people who get the most out of it'* (R9(h):11), three out of six recipients who were not head teachers were

able to express key 'learning leaps' in terms of their own understanding of senior leadership roles. These included: 'getting to grips' with their own leadership position in school; understanding the significance of 'school performance data' and using it to make an 'impact' on teaching and learning; 'managing staff' and the 'moral' purpose of leadership. One recipient comments:

*'The SLE came in and kind of helped me to get to grips with what my role was; monitoring, helping me to moderate books and things like that... identifying weaknesses and then going in and doing learning walks' (R3:7).*

Another recipient, also a middle leader, comments:

*'If I didn't talk to them (the SLE), I might be a bit lost as to where to go and what I need to do... if they hadn't asked me certain questions I don't know how quickly I would have got on to this journey' (R6:9).*

In terms of managing staff, one recipient head teacher describes how they observed a member of staff who had worked with an SLE holding someone to account; she says;

*'It was the first time I had heard that person be prepared to say that another colleague's lesson is inadequate and the things that need to be done' (R1(h):7).*

Another recipient also describes their increased understanding of managing staff and accountability; they liken the experience to teaching children:

*'Just like you have children who perhaps don't do what you want them to, you have got staff who don't do it... it's about going back and talking to them and saying, 'Come on, we have to look at this' (R8:11).*

This recipient also went on to articulate their understanding of the moral purpose of leadership. No longer a class teacher, they comment that while at first they missed having their own class, they realise now that:

*'They (the children) are not mine but as a leader now I find that what I am doing is for the good of the children, in terms of not just thirty, but four hundred...' (R8:11).*



Findings also demonstrate that where 'learning leaps' were expressed, so too was a change in perspective (n=5 SLEs and n=3 recipients). One SLE comments:

*'I see people differently now in terms of the way I speak... getting them to do things that need to be done' (SLE2:1).*

Another describes how through the SLE experience, they have been able to look at the establishment as a 'whole' to 'identify issues and weaknesses', illustrating their ability to see a bigger picture (SLE1:1). They continue to say:

*'It gave me the opportunity to think... what are the needs of this school, where are the weaknesses, why are they falling down. I could see what the barriers were to my support having impact...'* (SLE1:1).

Another SLE reports that working outside of their own school has helped them in 'identifying what it is that makes a school almost succeed or fail' (SLE4:3). The manager of the TSA also comments that they perceive the SLEs, 'being part of system leadership', have a 'wider' vision (MTSA). One head teacher also says of the SLEs on their staff:

*'They have realised how much it is apart from teaching... they can see the bigger picture much more quickly' (HSLEa:1).*

One recipient who reported a shift in their perception of school leadership, comments:

*'you do see it from a completely different perspective and you do get an understanding as to why things aren't working' (R3:7).*

This recipient continues to talk about the how working alongside the SLE has facilitated this shift. They report;

*'... when you do see the bigger picture and having done that with someone from outside particularly, you kind of see things with a different set of eyes and you get a better understanding, I think, of the bigger picture and those issues that really, you know, management are seeing but I never had that chance to see' (R3:7).*

Another recipient also commented that the coaching and modelling strategies used by their SLE were helping them to *'get the bigger picture, what's going on in my school'* (R6:9).

#### **4.4.2 Themes i) and j) Socialisation and professional identity change**

Other themes that emerged through the interview data were the concept of 'socialisation' and 'professional identity change'. Findings suggest that these themes are closely related; it is therefore beneficial to discuss them together. The notion of 'socialisation' was particularly notable in SLE responses. Opportunities to work alongside other leaders from different schools, was reported as a significant factor for professional growth for four SLEs. One SLE comments that the most important part of the experience was:

*'being able to evaluate myself against... other leaders... my own performance against them and... see where I could improve and perhaps where I am more successful'* (SLE1:1).

This SLE continues to explain that a key part of their professional development was the opportunity to look at *'the behaviour of leadership in different schools and how that impacts on standards of teaching and learning'* (SLE1:1). This is echoed by other SLEs who regard the opportunity to see and work alongside other leaders highly; one comments:

*'Working with those very senior members of staff, be that heads or deputies, you start to get a much better idea of the extra plates they have to juggle... it's made me far more empathetic of the issues that very senior leaders have'* (SLE6:5).

One head teacher of an SLE also recognises the potential of working alongside other senior leaders for professionally developing their staff. They comment:

*'They have seen lots of different leaders... they have seen different ways of doing things and they also see people under pressure... you can see people rise to the challenge, you can see*

*why people just hide from it all, so they have had to use different types of skills' (HSLEb:5).*

For two other SLEs, it was working alongside what they perceive to be good leaders in their home schools was significant. One SLE suggests that *'working with an exceptional leader'* in their home school contributed to them being able to identify leadership issues in other schools (SLE3:2). Another comments, *'in terms of what good leadership looks like, I see it here'* (SLE7:6). For recipients, the notion of 'socialisation' and the importance of working alongside other leaders was less evident. However, after working alongside an SLE, one recipient did comment:

*'Now I am the leader, I need to lead by example... I am beginning to try to be a bit more like them (the SLE)' (R6:9).*

Here, it can be seen that the socialisation experience of working alongside another leader has an influence on feelings of identity and the desire to emulate modelled professional behaviours.

As noted in 4.4.1, a 'mind-set shift' was reported by some participants; significantly demonstrating a change in perception of senior leadership roles. However, in terms of how colleagues viewed themselves or others, some changes in perceptions were reported. For example, one head teacher described how being designated and deployed as SLEs had *'raised the status of where they are'* (HSLEa:1) amongst colleagues. This is echoed by an SLE, who comments: *'I was incredibly proud to get the role... I felt my credibility had gone up'* (SLE3:2). One recipient, recently moved out of class to have more time to undertake leadership responsibilities, comments, *'Now I am not a class teacher, I am a leader... my profile in school is different... staff see me as a leader'* (R8:11). This demonstrates

a shift in their perception of themselves and how others see them, implying a sense of 'belonging' to the leadership group. The change in professional identity for this member of staff was also reported by the head teacher of this recipient, who suggests:

*'It (the SLE experience) has impacted on their perception of themselves as a leader, the staff's perceptions of them as a leader, their sense of accountability... it was before, it has just crystallised it for them... they are recognising what other people see in them' (R9(h):11).*

#### **4.4.3 Theme k) Purposeful engagement and career aspirations**

The theme of purposeful engagement with the SLE experience and its influence on career aspirations is also relevant when exploring what professional growth may have occurred for both the SLEs and recipients. Why did the SLEs apply for the positions? Has the experience and any leadership learning influenced career aspirations for the SLE or the recipient? Findings suggest a number of motivations for engagement with the programme for SLEs. The first of these was a sense of a 'moral purpose' and commitment to social justice for children. Other motivations include: a 'passion' for teaching; a general interest management and system leadership and career progression.

In terms of being driven by a moral purpose, one SLE describes the motivation for applying was their belief that:

*'...children everywhere have a good standard of education, what we don't want now is little pockets in cities of children who don't achieve well. That's not fair. Every child needs to have a good standard of education' (SLE1:1).*

This is echoed by another SLE who comments:

*‘... the kids, despite them all being very different, they all have similar needs... and they deserve to do well... the reason it (the SLE role) is brilliant is because you are making an impact on a hundred more kids than you would in your own school... you are improving lives’ (SLE6:5).*

The head of the TSA also suggests that in the process of ‘commissioning and brokering’ they should be ‘*putting the children first*’ (HTSA). As well as a moral purpose for the good of the children, one SLE describes their concern for staff well being and their desire to ‘*help them see they are in the role they are in on merit*’ (SLE4:3). They continue to express their moral commitment and their philosophy for supporting colleagues in their career. They explain:

*‘I have also got a bit of a theory on how being secure in who you are and the profession you are in, the job you are in, on merit and having various anchor points and helping people understand that anchor points are when you go climbing, you will hammer into the rock and then you will climb up a bit further and you will hammer in another anchor point and if you ever slip or fall you only ever fall as far as the last anchor point rather than fall and crash all the way down to the bottom... if we can get people to bang in anchor points, points where they say, ‘You know I got this job on merit,’ bang, ‘whatever lesson observation feedback I get is not going to bring me crashing down...’ try to help people to build some of these anchor points into their own lives, into their own work...’ (SLE4:3).*

As well as a ‘moral purpose’, SLEs also described their ‘passion’ for the job. One comments:

*‘It’s been my passion to raise standards ... and encourage other teachers to have that same passion as myself in wanting children to be successful’ (SLE1:1).*

Another views the opportunities provided by the SLE role for school to school support as ‘*an avenue to continue my passions*’ (SLE5:4). One SLE also comments on their role, ‘*I have been asked to do the thing that I am really passionate about*’ (SLE6:5). Another motivation for applying for the position was a general interest in leadership. One SLE reports:

*'I was fascinated by the dynamics between leaders... I am really interested in organisations and management structures and systems...'* (SLE3:2).

Another expressed their desire to have the opportunity to *'be more strategic'* (SLE6:5). Two SLEs described career progression as a key motivation for applying for the post, even though there was no increase in salary or change in role at their own school. Responses include feelings of stagnation in current posts, such as, *'I felt limited in what I could do and how I could use my skills and take things forward in school'* (SLE1:1) and, *'I felt I needed something because I was a bit bored... just wanting something more really'* (SLE2:1). Others felt that they had the necessary skills to do the job or that they were already doing a lot of school to school support through other avenues; typical comments were, *'I was sort of doing the role anyway... without a title'* (SLE4:3) and, *'I wanted to do more of the school to school support'* (SLE7:6).

Findings are mixed in terms of whether or not engagement with the programme as either an SLE or a recipient changed or influenced career aspirations. As more experienced leaders, some SLEs felt that the experience had no influence on their career aspirations; two SLEs in the first cohort quite quickly became heads of school. One SLE, however, commented that while it may not have *'changed'* career aspirations, it *'made the future seem a lot more exciting'* (SLE1:1). Three SLEs quite clearly felt that engagement with the programme was a significant step in the journey towards senior leadership. One comments:

*'I would sell it as a career move to anybody... it is a great opportunity to progress a little bit up the ladder in terms of experience... I feel far more equipped to go to an interview and talk about managing something strategically'* (SLE6:5).

Another says, *'It has given me the confidence to think, maybe I could be a deputy'* (SLE5:4). Another talks about how the SLE role as provided opportunities for career progression at a time when previously, opportunities may have been sought through the LA; they suggest, *'almost a door has shut into the LA... but another door has opened with school to school support'* (SLE4:3). This is echoed by a head teacher of an SLE, who reports, *'they might have seen themselves going into the advisory side of the business, but that's not really there anymore'* (HSLEc:4). They comment on their SLE that they are now *'looking at a deputy head position... which might not necessarily be where they were going,'* prior to the SLE role (HSLEc:4). Another head teacher remarks that for their SLE it is *'a good stepping stone'* and *'a good thing to put on your CV'* (HSLEb:5).

For recipients, findings are also mixed. Some were clear that their engagement with the SLE programme had no influence whatsoever on their career aspirations. One recipient who perceived the deployment had not been successful, commented that it had not had any influence other than the fact they wouldn't want to be an SLE (R7:10). However, three recipients did feel as though their experience of working with an SLE had influenced their career aspirations. One commented that they felt *'more confident'* to apply for a full time leadership position (R3:7) and another stated that, *'working with an SLE does show you where you need to be'* (R6:9). They continued to say that they didn't know about such *'avenues'* for progression previous to the deployment and they, *'didn't know an SLE existed'* (R6:9). After working with an SLE, another recipient commented, *'Yes... I think I might have something to offer other schools'* (R8:11). The head teacher of this recipient also commented that although they didn't think the

aspirations of this member of staff had necessarily changed, *'their recognition that they could aspire has... I don't think that they will go for headship or deputy headship, but I think they recognise that they could'* (R9(h):11).

#### 4.4.4 Theme I) Self belief

A more unexpected theme that arose from the interview data was that of 'self belief' and an increase in the participants' confidence in their ability to carry out their roles, both for the SLE and the recipients. Nearly all SLEs (n=6) reported some kind of increased self confidence in different aspects of the role. These included confidence in dealing with a 'bigger, larger amount of staff,' 'working with new people,' and 'different personalities,' in having 'difficult conversations,' and working in 'tricky situations.' Several SLEs describe being pushed 'out of their comfort zone,' and that aspects of the work were 'very challenging,' but suggest that they are a 'better SLE for it.' One SLE comments:

*'As a person it gives you the validation... the feeling of, 'I know I have done something here and I have led something here that's worked''* (SLE6:5).

Another says, when working in the recipient school, *'I don't think I'm afraid to speak to the head... before I would probably not be brave enough to say'* (SLE2:1). Speaking of the SLE employed on their staff, one head teacher comment:

*'I think they go in and not exude over confidence, but a confidence in knowing they can help... I've watched them grow'* (HSLEb:5).

The head of the TSA also comments, *'I can actually see... an increase in their own confidence'* (HTSA). For the SLEs there is also a sense that they can build on their experiences and their growing confidence in the role to be more effective. One



comments, *'When I go into another school I can be upfront about my expectations'* (SLE1:1) and another, *'my next experience... I will do it better'* (SLE6:5) and a third reports, *'next time I do it I know how I will do it'* (SLE2:1).

The findings demonstrate that two recipients also reported an increased sense of self belief. One comments, *'having the SLE enabled me to sit down, get my head around it and ... have the confidence to do it by myself after'* (R3:7). They continue to say that it has given them, *'a lot more confidence,'* in terms of recognising *'good practice'* and thinking about, *'actions, issues and impact'* (R3:7). Another recipient reports, *'time with the SLE has empowered me... it's given me the confidence to think, yes, I do know what I am doing, I can help you'* (R8:11). Increasing the self belief and confidence of this leader was a key factor in initially requesting the SLE deployment, as the head teacher of this school comments, *'the SLE in our school has been there... to safeguard X's confidence really'* (R9(h):11). Additionally, one SLE comments that an important outcome of one deployment was to *'put some confidence back into the staff'* (SLE1:1). While these recipients reported an increase in confidence, one recipient reported that they felt, *'a little bit thick,'* and *'not so confident,'* as their SLE appeared to be such an expert in the field while they did not (R6:9). They continue to say that this was, *'just their own feelings'* (R6:9).

#### **4.4.5 Summary of findings relating to Research Question 3**

Findings with respect to the question, *'What professional growth may have occurred for the recipient/the SLE as a result of the SLE deployment?'* demonstrate that learning occurred for different participants in different ways.

However, significant themes emerged that are worthy of note. For some participants, responses suggested a change in their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership; for both the SLE and recipient, 'learning leaps' were expressed. These include: a greater understanding of the 'mechanisms' of school senior leadership; greater flexibility; heightened awareness of the emotional wellbeing of staff; greater understanding of 'system' leadership; increased ability to manage workload effectively and improved skills in holding 'difficult' professional conversations. Coupled with the notion of learning leaps, changes in perspective, leading to seeing 'the bigger picture' of an organisation were also noted. The process of 'socialisation' was a significant theme, more widely for the SLEs, as the opportunity to work alongside and learn from senior leaders in other contexts was regarded as a valuable factor for professional growth. For some participants, responses indicated a change in perception of themselves and through socialisation experiences, a greater sense of 'belonging' to a community of practice as a leadership identity developed. The desire for 'career progression' was a factor in the SLEs' engagement with the programme, as well as a 'moral purpose' and 'passion' that was described. However, findings were mixed as to whether any learning that occurred was perceived to have contributed positively to career aspirations. The findings also highlight the notion of 'self belief' as an important theme; increased confidence in their own ability was reported by nearly all the SLEs and some recipients in several aspects of their roles.

#### **4.5 Research Question 4: How can the SLE experience be modified in order to best achieve its desired outcomes?**

Themes relevant to this question are: f) tensions within the role, g) successes of the SLE role and m) suggested improvements to the SLE role.

##### **4.5.1 Theme f) tensions**

While participants generally responded positively about the programme, some tensions within and around the role were articulated. Concerns focused on a wide range of aspects of the role, from the initial training to the matching of schools in the brokering process, the lack of financial incentive and the workload of SLEs. As described in section 4.3.1, there was a mixed response to the training provided by the NCTL; generally SLEs with more leadership experience commented that the training was ‘repetition’ and ‘not tailored’ to their experience and skills. Findings suggest another concern was the ‘matching’ of SLEs to particular schools. While in some cases this had been perceived as highly effective and the deployment warmly received, in others it had not. In this sample, this was the case in two recipient schools where they had not specifically requested this kind of support; it was more a ‘done to’ model. Both the SLEs and the recipients in these instances reported that the deployments had not been particularly successful and raised concerns that the matching process should, in the future, be very carefully considered. One recipient suggests, *‘it was decided on all fronts that it hadn’t been that successful in some areas’* (R1(h):7) and another states, *‘we knew it wasn’t working’* (R2:7). In this instance the school was in ‘Special Measures’ and four of the SLEs had been deployed to work there by the TSA. Two of the SLEs commented that it was *‘hard to see any impact’* (SLE1:1, SLE2:1) of their work and another that *‘the school needed something fundamentally different to what an*

*SLE could do'* (**SLE3:2**). Responses from both the recipients and the SLEs suggested that in this instance there was 'too many people', which resulted in 'over lapping' and 'time wasting', with 'no consistent approach'. The recipients also went on to explain that they felt the SLEs had not been well matched; *'it wasn't what the needs of the school were'* (**R1(h):7**) one reports, and another, *'they were sent in with a remit that didn't match what we knew'* (**R2:7**). This recipient continued to say that they felt in those circumstances, the SLEs didn't have, *'enough experience given the nature of the politics in the school,'* and that they were, *'not at the right level'* (**R2:7**). While this was one of the first deployments, both the head and manager of the TSA recognise that this deployment didn't work well for a number of reasons and suggest that changes have been made in light of this:

*'We very quickly learnt from that about... actually not sending SLEs to schools that are so very vulnerable... unless there are particular circumstances...'* (**MTSA**).

Another tension around the role, suggested by one SLE is the lack of financial incentive on a personal level; there is no extra pay for undertaking the role, despite an increase in workload being reported. At the time the interviews were undertaken, there was also no financial benefit for the home school; payments for SLE services were made to the TSA, with *'no reciprocality'* as described by one head teacher of an SLE (**HSLEc:4**). However, recent changes allow for home schools to invoice the TSA for the time their staff have spent on SLE activities. While the home school and SLE initially received no financial benefit, it was suggested by both a recipient and an SLE that it was *'very expensive'* support for the recipient schools (**R1(h):7**, **SLE3:2**). One SLE commented on their increased workload (**SLE2:1**), with two head teachers of SLEs reporting that they were

worried about 'burn out' of their staff (HSLEa:1, HSLEb:5). One recipient also commented about the SLEs deployed at their school and the pressure they were under: *'people are stressed when they are coming here...'* (R1(h):7). Findings suggest there were also tensions around the commitment to the deployment of the home school; certainly there were differences between the head teachers of SLEs in their understanding. One head teacher comments, *'As long as I can pull them back if I need to...'* (HSLEa:1) whereas another head teacher reports that there should *'not be an assumption that the SLE can get out, because home schools are always busy'* (HSLEb:5). One head teacher had a member of staff who was an SLE in this TSA, but the school itself was not part of it; rather, this school was involved with two other TSAs in the Midlands. The head teacher commented on the tensions this caused, suggesting, *'it raises issues, potential issues, as to where xx might be best deployed'* (HSLEc:4). They go on to say, *'it's a difficulty that we don't have a direct influence on that particular TSA'* (HSLEc:4).

#### 4.5.2 Theme g) successes

As discussed in section 4.4, findings suggest that there was success in terms of the professional growth that occurred for some SLEs and recipients. However, further perceived successes were also reported in terms of pupil progress and raising standards. Generally, where schools had requested SLE support themselves, outcomes were specific and mutually understood. In these cases, participants (SLEs and recipients) were generally positive and felt that these had largely been achieved. One recipient comments:

*'the buzz about phonics is brilliant now, the teachers, the planning is better... it's more engaging for the children'* (R8:11).

The head teacher of this school states, *'at the core of it there has been an improvement in teaching'* (R9(h):11). A head teacher of another recipient school suggests *'...it has led to, as I say, quite significant change'* (R4(h):8). A further recipient comments:

*'The training has been successful... in terms of writing with symbols throughout the school, we have managed to embed that more...'* (R3:7).

One recipient suggests that the deployment *'worked best where staff have been ready to receive and open to receive support'* (R1(h):7).

Other aspects of the programme also identified as being successful were features such as, *'going in as a team,'* where SLEs went into schools in pairs or more, allowing them to *'bounce ideas off each other'* (SLE2:1). Opportunities to *'network'* were also seen as a successful element of the deployments (SLE7:6), as well as the fact that it was a *'tailored programme'* (SLE4:3). Head teachers of SLEs also reported the benefits to their own schools; one suggests that as a result of their SLE, *'it is recognised we have talent here... we have something to offer schools'* (HSLEb:5). Another head teacher comments, *'I think they have come back and reflected on their own staff and how they are moving along...'* (HSLEa:1).

#### **4.5.3 Theme m) improvements**

Where deployments were regarded as successful, little was suggested in the way of improvements. However, given the nature of some of the tensions reported around the role, some modifications were suggested by participants. The first of these was the need for more careful *'matching'* of SLEs to schools, in terms of their experience and skill set. One recipient suggested *'it needs to be co-ordinated better'* (R2:7). In terms of the workload of the SLE and the effect on the

home school, another recipient suggested that SLEs should only come from schools, *'that truly have the capacity'* (R1(h):7). For the programme to be successful, one head teacher of an SLE comments that, *'there must be dialogue with the head teacher where they work'* (HSLEa:1). Another head teacher recommends *'sending them in pairs,'* believing this to give them more *'confidence'* in the role (HSLEb:5). One final suggestion from an SLE, was the opportunity for *'shadowing'* other SLEs in role, as a strategy for further learning and training for themselves (SLE5:4).

#### **4.5.4 Summary of findings relating to Research Question 4**

To summarise the findings relating to the question, *'How can the SLE experience be modified in order to best achieve its desired outcomes?'* tensions reported around the role were explored, as well as its wider successes. Participants' suggestions for improvements were also noted. In terms of tensions and issues raised, the initial training received was perceived by some SLEs to have limited value. The *'matching'* of SLEs to schools was also reported as a concern where the deployments were perceived to have been less successful. Other tensions for the SLEs include the lack of financial incentive and increased workload, where as the head teachers' of SLEs articulated both the priority of the home school for the SLE and the difficulty for them when not part of the TSA. As well as the documented leadership learning that occurred, improved pupil performance, improved teaching and embedded initiatives were all reported as being successes of the programme. Other successful elements described include a *'team'* approach, the opportunity to network and the recognition of talent. Suggested modifications to the role include: more carefully considered matching of SLEs to

schools in some instances; ensuring that home schools have enough capacity so that SLEs are not over burdened with the demands of their 'day job' and the SLE role; thorough dialogue between the TSA and the head teachers of SLEs; a continued 'team' approach and further professional development opportunities for the SLE such as 'shadowing'.



## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are discussed in relation to relevant literature. Each research question is discussed in turn; for each question there is a brief review of the key themes identified in the findings, followed by a critical discussion drawing upon literature pertinent to each theme. Following this, the research question is then addressed.

### 5.2 Research Question 1: How is leadership learning within the SLE deployment conceptualised in different schools?

A number of key themes emerged from the findings relating to this research question. These are: the nature of the deployments; the expected outcomes of the deployments and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLE. Findings indicate that there is no fixed template for how learning within the SLE deployment is conceptualised in schools. Rather, deployments are ‘bespoke’ and develop as the SLE and the school work together. Although deployments are tailored to each context, a significant feature was that learning for the recipient usually takes place ‘on-site’, in their own school. Another theme was how the expected outcomes of the deployment shaped the nature of the learning that took place. Finally, an understanding of the SLE roles and responsibilities is also of significance in discussing how learning is conceptualised in different schools.

#### 5.2.1 The nature of the deployments

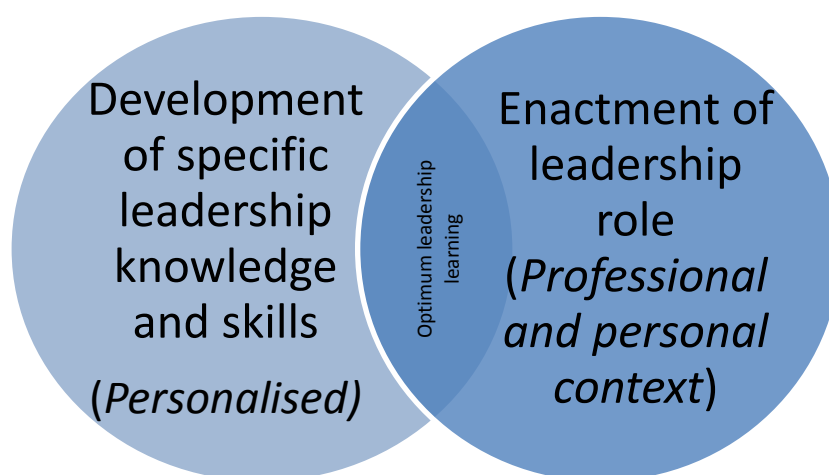
Described as ‘*an onion you are unpeeling*’ (HSLEb:5) the SLE deployment evolves as the SLE and the school work together to establish a plan of action to

meet the desired objectives. All SLEs, their head teachers and the head and manager of the TSA (n=12) described a 'bespoke' or 'tailored' programme, which could include any number of visits or range of strategies, including coaching and modelling of leadership activities, such as learning walks, observations, pupil work scrutinies and data analysis. This is congruent with the more favourable trend of 'personalised' rather than 'standardised' leadership development advocated by Bush et al.'s (2007) '21<sup>st</sup> Century leadership learning', the NCTL (2008) and Dimmock (2012). The SLE programme is intended to be based on 'need', either of the recipient school, of the individual member of staff or both; indeed, as articulated by the manager of the TSA, '*you have to start from where they are*' (**MTSA**). Confirmation of the success of such a 'needs based' approach was demonstrated where schools had undertaken their own needs analysis and had requested SLE support in specific areas, compared to schools where an external body (either the LA or the TSA) had brokered the support; findings here suggest that the recipients perceived that their needs had not been well matched to the support offered and the deployments were felt not to have been as successful.

While the strategies employed and the frequency and durations of visits varied, a common feature of all deployments, was that they occurred onsite in the recipients' school, with one exception of a visit to an SLE's home school. This approach afforded the benefit of 'work based' and 'onsite' learning for the recipient, in agreement with Bush et al.'s (2007) '21<sup>st</sup> Century leadership learning' typology. The significance of learning in context is also a key feature of theories of adult learning (Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1997; Eraut, 2000; Billet, 2008). Indeed, Torrance (2013) asserts that 'Contextualised experience or work place learning

potentially offers a powerful model of professional learning...' (p213). Certainly, this was regarded as an advantage by some recipients; referring to the benefit of having someone coming into school and working alongside them, one recipient suggests, *'I don't think any courses can really have the same impact'* (R3:7), continuing to say that the SLE helped them to *'get to grips'* with their role in school. This has resonance with Billet's (2008) assertion of a 'relational interdependence' between the individual and their social context, suggesting that each is vital for professional learning. This approach is advocated by Pegg (2007) who also asserts that such experiential learning is essential to bridge the gap between what might have been learnt on leadership development courses and day to day practice. This can be seen as the first stage in developing a new conceptualisation of leadership learning represented by the figure below (see figure 5.1), where optimum learning occurs in the space where the development of specific leadership knowledge and skills overlap with the enactment of the role; indeed, this is the arena where SLEs and recipients interact.

*Figure 5.1: A new conceptualisation of Leadership Learning (stage 1).*



This new conceptualisation brings together existing literature that recognises 'doing the job' alone is not sufficient or adequate in terms of equipping leaders with

the necessary skills to undertake senior roles successfully (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Bush, 2008, Dimmock, 2012), but also that the development of skills outside of a relevant context has limitations (Pegg, 2007 Billet, 2008); as Barber et al. (2010) suggest, 'you learn to lead by leading' (p51). This conceptualisation of leadership learning necessitates a 'personalised' approach; learning is centred in the professional and personal context of the individual, drawing on their day to day experiences, relationships and the personal qualities they bring to the programme. Leadership learning through the enactment of a leadership role also has resonance with literature concerning the notion of professional growth; the themes of role conceptualisation, socialisation, identity, purposeful engagement and self belief are pertinent here, discussed further in section 5.4. While the enactment of the role offers the opportunity to practise and apply skills learnt, there may also be negative factors in the work place that need to be considered. For example, the middle leader may not have a positive role model in the head teacher or the head may not be supportive of such leadership development. The school may also be in an Ofsted category or there may be other political and emotional factors impeding the opportunities for middle leaders to aspire and flourish.

### **5.2.2 The expected outcomes of the deployments**

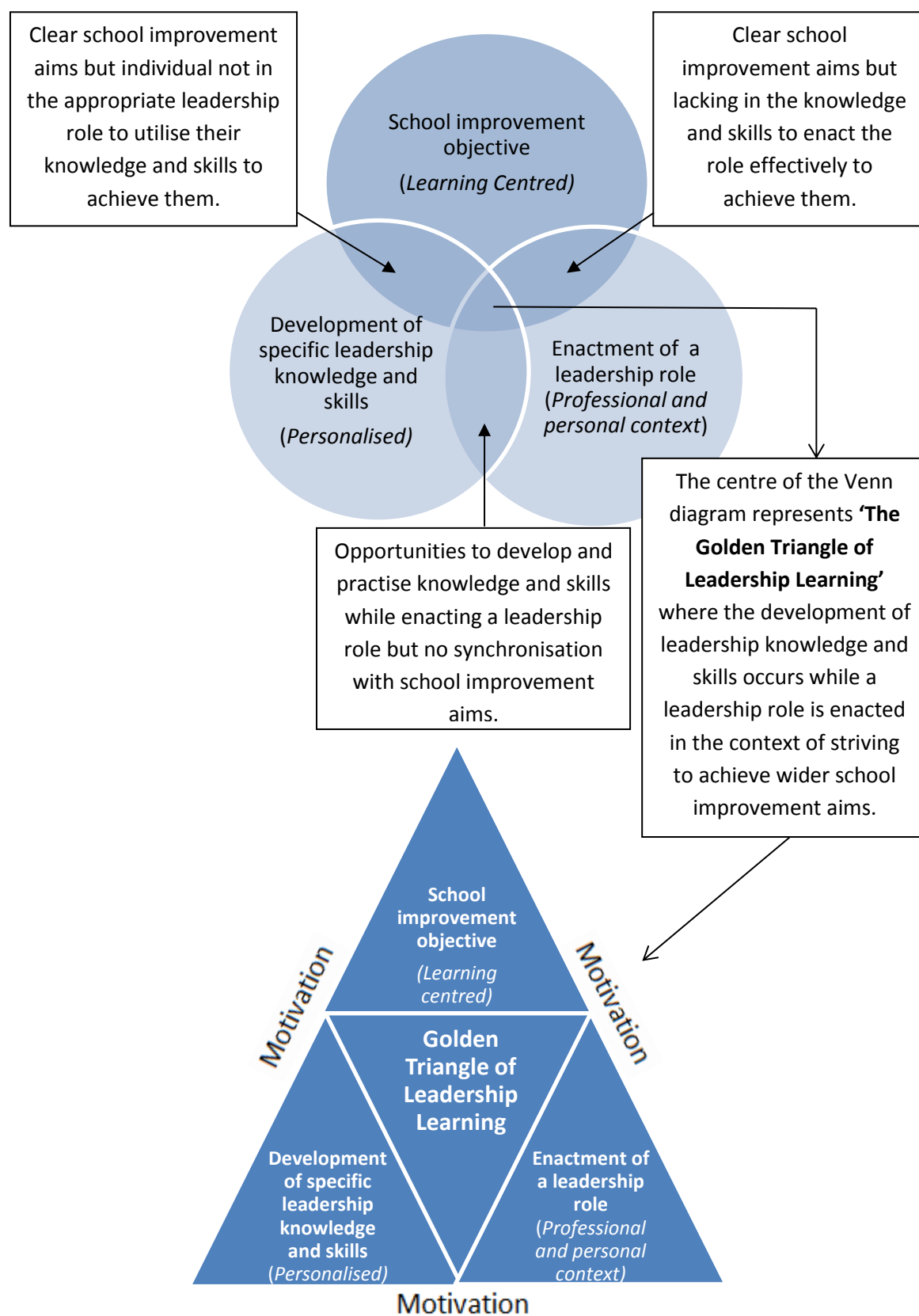
While the expected outcomes were clear to SLEs for all deployments, recipients reported that these were less clear where the schools had not requested the SLE support themselves (schools 7 and 10). While it is suggested that adults learn best when they are 'motivated' and that a willingness to learn is a fundamental principle of adult learning theories (Gallo, 1971; Barber et al., 2010, Knowles et al., 2011), findings suggest that in a 'done to' model of SLE support 'motivation' was limited.

Recipients in these two schools reported that the outcomes were 'not clear' to them; without a mutual understanding of the expected outcomes to drive the programme and shape learning, these deployments were perceived as less successful by the recipients. Here, the lack of motivation can be seen to act as a limiting factor in terms of inhibiting the level of recipient engagement with the programme, preventing the acquiescence of expected outcomes and fostering a resistance to professional growth; there appeared to be a 'disinclination' to engage (Evans, 1998). This also has resonance with Maslow's (2012) theory, where individuals are motivated by the desire to achieve the basic physiological, safety, love, esteem and self actualisation needs. Maslow (2012) suggests that any danger to the defences that protect these goals may bring about 'emergency reactions' (p39); the 'done to' model of SLE deployment may have been regarded as a threat to self esteem and self actualisation by recipients. Alternatively, where schools sought engagement with the programme, motivation levels facilitated a commitment to understanding and achieving the objectives and an openness to professional growth; this is expressed by one recipient who comments, '*where it's worked best is where our staff have been ready to receive and open to receive that support...*' (R1(H)7). In line with theories of adult learning, it would seem that 'motivation' is a desirable condition for leadership learning to occur.

In other deployments, the professional development of the middle leader was not necessarily the primary objective of the deployments; rather the key aim was some form of wider curriculum improvement. This has congruence with the notion that learning happens best when delivered through the broader aims of school improvement, when the needs of the aspirant leader are synchronised with the

needs of the school (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007; Barber et al., 2010). For the recipient schools in this sample, SLE support was sought to tweak the maths curriculum (school 8), to raise standards in maths (school 9) and to improve the teaching of and pupil attainment in phonics (school 11) and through this process, professionally develop middle leaders. Along with the desire for a 'motivated' participant, this element can also be added to the new conceptualisation of leadership learning (see figure 5.2). Here, it can be seen that where two elements overlap there are limitations, but the centre of the Venn diagram offers 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning', where the elements of 'the development of specific knowledge and skills', 'enactment of a leadership role' and the focus on a 'school improvement objective' overlap, providing the individual with new leadership knowledge and skills and the opportunity to both practise and apply them in a specific role for a specific purpose. Underpinned by the motivation to engage with professional development, this new conceptualisation offers an approach to leadership development that bridges the gap between standardised traditional off-site training and work-based learning. Achieved through the context of a school improvement aim, a personalised, learning centred approach is required. When the SLE deployment is successful, it is evident that the SLE and the recipient interact within 'The Golden Triangle', where the personalised acquisition of knowledge and development of skills is facilitated through the enactment of leadership roles, framed within the context of achieving school improvement objectives. Based on the findings in this study, in order to contribute towards a new model for leadership learning, this new conceptualisation warrants further testing and further research as described in **6.1**.

Figure 5.2: A new conceptualisation of Leadership Learning (stage 2) demonstrating 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning'.



Given the increased importance and the complexity of the role of the middle leader (NCSL, 2006; Briggs, 2007; Zhang, 2013) and the suggested limited opportunities for their development (Barber et al., 2010), this approach to the professional development of middle leaders is of significance. As middle and senior leaders themselves, the majority of SLEs (n=6) expressed that they felt professionally developed by the role, having the opportunity to develop and practise skills outside of their day to day context. For the recipients, half of the middle leaders (n=3) responded that such a bespoke package of on-site training was extremely beneficial in ways that traditional off-site leadership courses could not be. While the enactment of middle leadership roles can occur in both the leadership and classroom arenas, the SLE programme supports middle leaders in their own context, tailored to their professional activities in that specific role. Further discussion of the successes of the programme and the implications of this new conceptualisation of leadership learning are discussed further in **5.4**, **5.5** and **6.2**.

### **5.2.3 The role and responsibilities of the SLE**

All participants were able to articulate their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLEs. Key features of the role were reported as: evolving, facilitating some kind of change or improvement and being part of 'system' leadership. Inconsistencies in perceptions around the 'level' at which SLEs were intended to work were also identified.

Introduced through the 'White Paper' (Department for Education, 2010), SLEs are a new role. Five SLEs in this sample were in the first cohort nationally, designated as SLEs in 2012. Given this, almost all SLEs, their head teachers and staff from



the TSA described the role as ‘evolving’ in some way (n=12). This was viewed positively by some as the chance to make the role their own, to be creative and to offer a flexible and bespoke service. However, where the deployments were perceived to be less successful the infancy of the role was met with criticism eliciting responses such as *‘we felt like we were guinea pigs... our impression was... here’s an opportunity to come and have a play at it...’* (R7:10) and *‘I don’t think they knew what their purpose was...’* (R2:7). Here, it can be suggested that Rousseau’s (1990) ‘psychological contract’ between the SLE and the recipient appears to be in need of repair. For these recipients, expectations of the SLEs were not inline with their interactions with them. Without the fulfilment of such expectations and mutual aims, the ‘psychological contract’ was broken; there was limited confidence in the SLE’s ability to undertake the role well from the recipient’s point of view; the implications of this are discussed further in **6.2**.

The majority of the SLEs (n=6) expressed their understanding that the role facilitated some kind of change or improvement. As previously discussed, synchronisation of the wider improvement aims of the organisation and personal professional development is widely advocated (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007; Barber et al., 2010). In addition to this, findings demonstrate that deployments away from their home school provided SLEs with experience and a greater understanding of ‘system’ leadership’ (discussed further in **5.3.1**). However, while the Government, and indeed the TSA is clear that the role is intended to develop leadership capacity and not classroom practice (NCTL, 2013a), a classroom focus was a key element of some deployments; this may have been in terms of delivering training to class teachers, modelling lessons and

joint planning. However, rather than necessarily a criticism of the SLE programme, such inconsistency around the intended 'level' at which the SLE works has resonance with key themes in the literature relevant to the complexities of middle leadership roles. While regarded as increasingly important (NCSL, 2006; Briggs, 2007; Zhang, 2013), the roles and responsibilities of a middle leader can include being a successful role model for classroom practice (Busher, 2005) in addition to other more senior leadership activities such as managing networks or clusters across schools and delivering professional development to staff (Barber et al., 2010). Given that the literature suggests middle leader responsibilities straddle both improving classroom practice and developing leadership capacity in others, it might be anticipated that an initiative aimed specifically at developing middle leadership might encounter similar complexities and inconsistencies.

#### **5.2.4 The research question addressed**

To address the research question, '*How is leadership learning within the SLE deployment conceptualised in different schools?*' the findings suggest that it is conceptualised differently in different schools and by different SLEs themselves. However, there are some common elements that can be identified and are worthy of note. Firstly, in line with recommendations for a '21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership Learning' approach (Bush et al., 2007), rather than traditional methods, the SLE initiative characterises a 'personalised' and 'needs based' approach where schools have requested the support. The nature of the deployment provides the opportunity for the recipient of on-site, work-based training. While these are also features of Bush et al.'s (2007) model, the notion of learning in context is also congruent to many theories of how adults learn best (Pegg, 2007; Billet, 2008;

Torrance, 2013). In addition to this, where schools identified their own needs and requested SLE support, the leadership learning of the recipients took place in the context of working towards wider school improvement objectives with the expectation that the deployment would affect some kind of change. This again is recognised as being a successful approach to leadership development (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007; Barber et al., 2010) and in particular for models of 'learning centred' leadership. As demonstrated in figure 5.2, a new conceptualisation of leadership learning is offered, featuring 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning', based on the successful elements of the SLE programme. This suggests that learning happens best where specific, 'needs-based' knowledge and skills are learnt, as a leadership role is enacted in the context of achieving wider school improvement aims; all three elements provide the optimum conditions for leadership learning. Finally, the SLE initiative offers experience of and greater insight into 'system leadership', providing opportunities for the SLE and the recipient school to learn from each other, discussed in more detail in 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. Rather than a flaw within the nature of the programme, the inconsistencies reported around the expected 'level' at which the SLE should work seem to reflect more general tensions within the middle leadership tier as encompassing both improving classroom practice and wider whole school responsibilities (Busher, 2005).

### **5.3 Research Question 2: How has the SLE deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?**

Key themes that emerged from the findings relate in turn to 'leadership learning for the SLE' and 'leadership learning for the recipient'. For the SLE, leadership learning was reported as being facilitated primarily through the 'opportunities' the

role provided. These opportunities included: formal training offered by the NCTL; the chance to practice and develop skills in setting outside of their home school and requests for further work as a result of the SLE experience. For the recipients, strategies such as coaching and modelling of leadership activities that included joint lesson observations, learning walks, pupil work scrutinies and data analysis were identified as being useful for their learning. Recipients also reported the wider benefits of school to school support, such as the chance to have professional conversations with colleagues from other schools and sharing practice. The emotional support offered by SLEs was also noted.

### **5.3.1 Leadership learning for the SLE**

Findings suggest that SLEs' perceived leadership learning was facilitated through the initial formal training offered, the chance to demonstrate and practise leadership skills outside of their own setting and the opportunities granted through requests for their services as a consequence of SLE deployments.

The formal training offered through the NCTL had a mixed response from the SLEs with the majority (n=4) feeling that it did not match their needs. The other SLEs (n=3) who had less leadership experience responded more positively. This would appear to confirm the desire to move away from the traditional 'prescriptive', 'standardised' and 'class-room based' approach to leadership development as described by Bush et al. (2007) to a more personalised, needs based programme advocated by Dimmock (2012). However, for those who did view the training more positively, notably SLEs with less leadership experience, the 'content' was perceived to be useful, despite a 'content-led' approach being regarded as more

traditional (Bush et al., 2007). In line with Bush (2008) and the NCSL (2004), the content delivered during the training included, for example, the themes of 'leading and managing organisations' and 'developing leaders', which can also be identified in the more recent NCTL leadership curriculum (2013b).

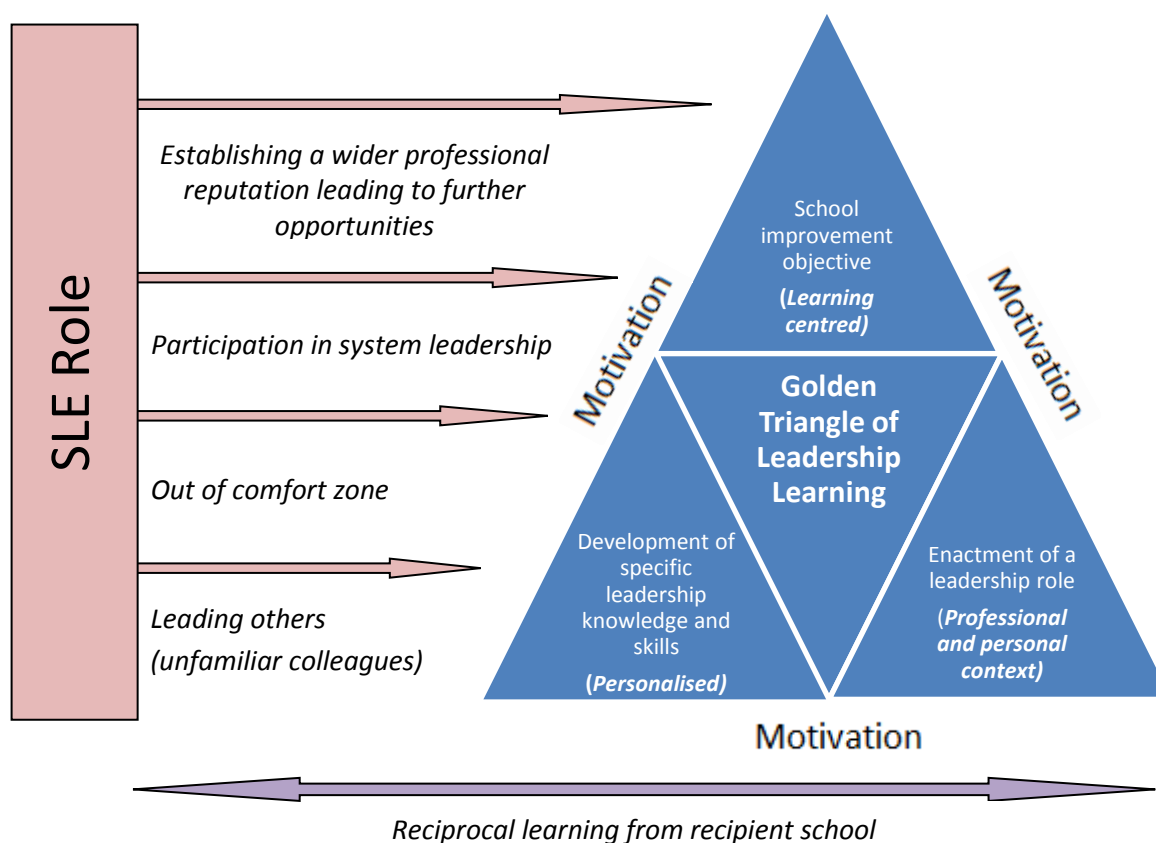
In addition to the formal training all SLEs (n=7) reported that the opportunity to work outside of their own setting was beneficial in terms of their own professional development. This is in line with a number of key ideas relating to leadership development. Firstly, the nature of the deployments enabled the SLEs to step out of the 'comfort zone' of their own school and take on the new role of leading others, regarded as a successful approach to leadership development (Barber et al., 2010). The notion of providing opportunities to lead is also regarded as an important strand of talent management within and across schools (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Barber et al., 2010; Matthews et al., 2011) and described as participation in 'lateral development' (Matthews et al., 2011), a chance to broaden their experience and develop skills in new and often testing circumstances. In addition to this, the notion of 'reciprocal' learning was also reported; SLEs learnt from their recipient schools. One SLE reported, '*...it's always rewarding to work with staff because you both learn from it*' (SLE3:2) and another, '*There were things to learn from that I took away that I wasn't planning to...*' (SLE6:5). This is in line with the NCTL who suggest that the notion of reciprocal learning is a key element of 'system' leadership (NCTL, 2013a). It is also 'critical practice' identified by Barber et al. (2010) who maintain that a number of education systems are increasing the opportunities for school leaders to learn from each other, 'through networks and clusters' (p17). As well as the opportunities granted to the SLEs

through the deployments themselves, some of the SLEs ( $n=5$ ) reported that they had been requested to work elsewhere, or had experienced other opportunities as a consequence of their role as an SLE. This can be seen to have resonance with Gronn's (1999) 'accession' stage in his four phase model. In undertaking deployments, the SLEs are publically demonstrating their leadership capabilities, or 'wing-stretching' as he describes, attracting the attention of 'role sponsors' and 'talent spotters' (p36). Through the deployments they are building up their professional reputations, experience and skills' repertoire, alerting others to the fact that they are credible leaders able to take on new roles.

The notion of working outside of the home school and the additional opportunities that arise as a consequence of building a professional reputation are elements that can be added to the new conceptualisation of leadership learning (see figure 5.3). Here, 'The Golden Triangle' is represented, but further aspects gained by working outside of the home school are added. These include: the notion of stepping outside of a comfort zone; participation in system leadership across schools; leading new and unfamiliar colleagues; reciprocal learning from the recipient school and the opportunities afforded from establishing a wider professional reputation. This conceptualisation still relies upon 'motivation' as a key driver and the other significant elements included earlier of: leadership learning through the development of specific knowledge and skills, the enactment of a leadership role (taking into account personal and professional circumstances) and the context of achieving a school improvement objective. Figure 5.3 demonstrates a new conceptualisation of leadership learning for the SLE that can be applied both in and out of the home school where further elements (for example, working out of a

comfort zone) have been added. The implications of this are discussed further in 6.2.

Figure 5.3: A new conceptualisation of leadership learning (stage 3a): Leadership learning for the SLE.



### 5.3.2 Leadership learning for the recipient

For the recipients, it was reported that leadership learning was facilitated through specific strategies such as coaching and modelling leadership activities. The wider benefits of a school to school model were also reported as beneficial, as was the emotional support offered to some recipients.

Three recipients specifically identified ‘coaching’ as a strategy they perceived advanced their professional learning. With the SLE described as a ‘facilitator’, a positive feature was the fact the recipients maintained ownership of the planned programme, feeling that their contributions were valued. This is in agreement with others who identify coaching as an effective strategy for developing leadership capacity (Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2005; Hanbury, 2009; Rhodes et al., 2009). Bush (2013) draws upon the work of Robertson (2005) who describes coaching as a process that:

*‘involves two people setting and achieving professional goals, being open to new learning, and engaging in dialogue for the purpose of improving leadership practice...’* (Bush, 2013, p457).

This has congruence with Rousseau’s (1990) ‘psychological contract’ and can be identified in SLE deployments, where the ‘matching’ of the SLE to the recipient was a significant factor in the success of the programme. This is also in agreement with Bush et al. (2007) who suggest that coaching appears to be most effective when there is careful matching of the coach and the coachee. However, where Bush (2013) comments that coaching involves ‘achieving professional goals’ to improve ‘leadership practice’, within the new conceptualisation of leadership learning offered here, this would be extended to include the ‘organisational goals’ of school improvement.

In addition to coaching, ‘modelling’ was also reported as being an effective strategy for facilitating learning by three recipients; this is in agreement with Southworth (2004) and Lewis and Murphy (2008) who assert that it is a key tool through which leaders assert their influence. Currently, the NCTL (2014d), also assert that this is an important strategy, suggesting that ‘Modelling is all about the power of example.

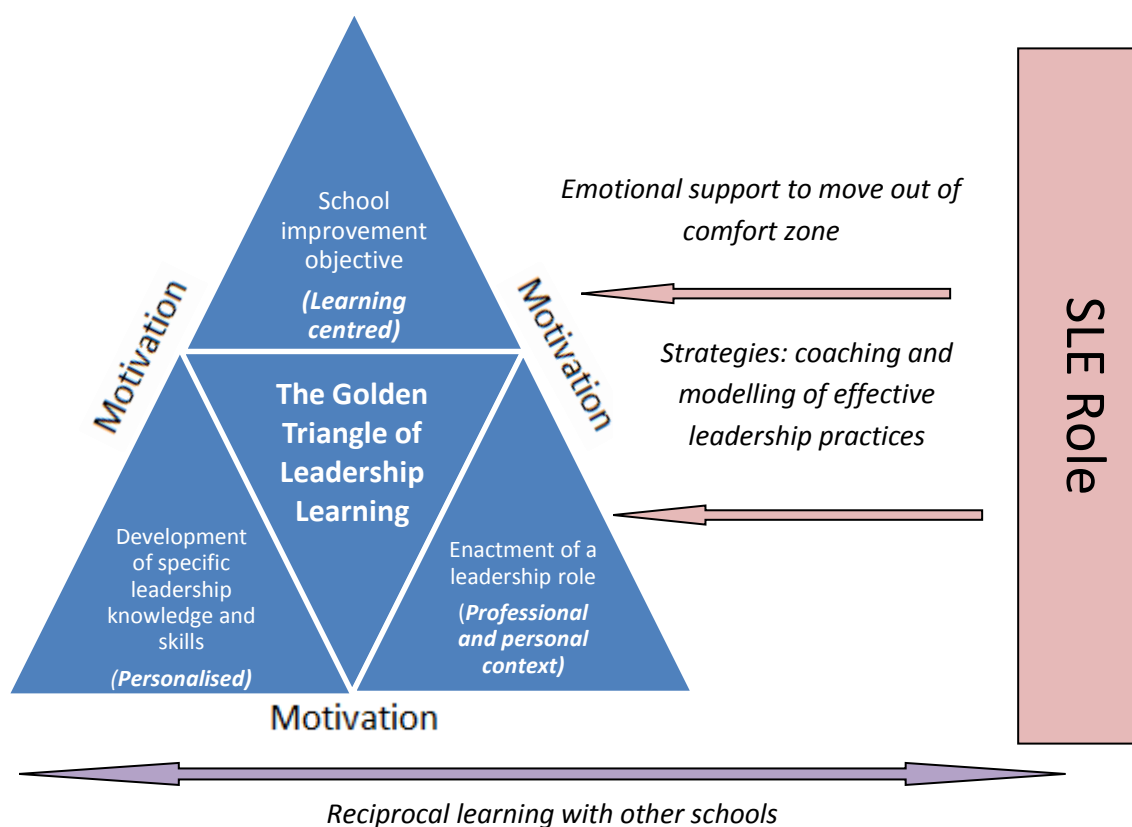


Teachers and head teachers... know this influences pupils and colleagues alike' (np). Although in some deployments, modelling of classroom practice did occur, it was the modelling of leadership practices that were identified as most successful. This included modelling of lesson observations, learning walks, pupil work scrutinies, data analysis and having difficult professional conversations. These activities can all be seen to be practices of effective leaders (Day et al., 2010, Barber et al., 2010), focusing on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, monitoring performance, setting high expectations and role modelling behaviours. These key practices are also fundamental elements of 'learning centred' leadership (Macbeath and Dempster, 2010; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010), advocated by the NCTL (2014d). As well as the specific, 'personalised' strategies of coaching and modelling, the wider benefits of a school to school model of support were also reported by the recipients in a similar way to the SLEs. The SLE deployments facilitated the establishment of professional relationships across and between schools, which can be described as 'networking' (Bush, 2008; Crawford and Earley, 2011). The opportunities reported as arising from this include the sharing of practice and the opportunity to hold professional conversations.

While not necessarily an example of 'leadership learning' for the recipient, the 'emotional support' offered by some SLEs to the recipients can be seen as necessary for leadership learning to occur. Hargreaves (2008) asserts that leadership is 'emotional' and that effective leaders manage this to ensure their leadership is 'positive and purposeful' (p135). Such 'emotional coherence' (Crawford, 2007) is perceived as a key characteristic of effective leaders (Southworth, 2008; Bullock, 2009). The emotional support offered during at least

two deployments therefore, can be seen as important in facilitating leadership learning. The findings demonstrate that in particular instances, the emotional support offered by the SLEs was significant in promoting increased confidence, strengthening the recipients' feelings of self-efficacy and reducing anxiety in challenging situations. This is agreement with Margolis (2007) who suggests that 'without adequate self-efficacy and motivation, learners are unlikely to engage fully in learning' (p235); the concept of 'self-efficacy' is discussed further in **5.4.5**. The emotional support offered here can be seen as supporting recipients who are enacting a role out of their comfort zone and can be included in a conceptualisation of leadership learning for the recipient (see figure 5.4 below). The strategies used for the facilitation of leadership learning are also added.

*Figure 5.4: A new conceptualisation of leadership learning (stage 3b) Leadership learning for the recipient.*



### 5.3.3 The research question addressed

To answer the question, *‘How has the SLE deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?’* findings demonstrate that experiences were different for the SLEs and the recipients. Initially, the SLEs were offered more formal, standardised training sessions, which the more experienced leaders felt were not useful or well matched to their needs in line with literature advocating more ‘personalised’ approaches (Bush, et al., 2007; Dimmock, 2012). In addition to the formal training sessions offered, SLEs reported that the deployments facilitated leadership learning in a variety of ways that are also advocated in the literature. These are:

- *the opportunity step outside of comfort zones (Barber et al., 2010);*
- *to take on a new role and learn to lead by ‘leading’ (Barber et al., 2010; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006):*
- *participating in ‘lateral’ development across schools (Matthews et al., 2011);*
- *reaping the benefits of reciprocal learning (NCTL, 2013a) and*
- *building a professional reputation outside of their own school that created other opportunities (Gronn, 1999).*

These are demonstrated in figure 5.3. Building upon the new conceptualisation of leadership learning established in 5.2.2, this illustration demonstrates how the three key elements of school improvement, the development of leadership skills and the enactment of the role can be developed further outside of the home school as the additional benefits of working across schools are highlighted.

The recipients reported that leadership learning for them was primarily facilitated through the individual strategies of ‘coaching’ and ‘modelling’. The benefit of these strategies as tools for developing leadership capacity is widely recognised (Southworth, 2004; Hallinger and Snidvongs, 2005; Lewis and Murphy, 2008;

Hanbury, 2009). The use of 'coaching' enabled the recipient to maintain feelings of ownership and empowerment, while the modelling of leadership activities demonstrated an effective 'learning centred' approach. In addition to this the benefits of networking and establishing relationships with other schools were identified as being valuable, so too was the 'emotional support' offered in terms of building self-confidence, efficacy and stepping out of the comfort zone. These are demonstrated in figure 5.4.

#### **5.4 Research Question 3: What professional growth may have occurred for the recipient/the SLE as a result of the SLE deployment?**

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) suggests that professional growth can be viewed through the aspects of: role conceptualisation; socialisation; role-identity transformation and purposeful engagement. However, findings relating to this research question suggest that where professional growth occurred, it did so in different ways for different participants and necessitates a re-working of Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) framework. In terms of a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership, both SLEs and recipients reported significant 'learning leaps'; for example, an increased understanding of the 'mechanisms' of school leadership and improved skills in holding 'difficult conversations'. Coupled with this, a change of perspective was noted as participants reported seeing the 'bigger picture' of their school. Where conceptualisation of senior leadership roles remained unchanged, limiting factors are noted. For SLEs, the process of 'socialisation' was reported as being an important feature contributing to their professional growth, particularly having the opportunity to work alongside other leaders. In terms of the notion of 'role identity transformation', a 'mind-set shift' was reported by some recipients, reflecting a change in how they perceived themselves or how

colleagues viewed them. However, a sense of 'belonging' developed through socialisation experiences was also noted as important for changes in professional identity. Findings also demonstrate that the often neglected concept of 'self belief' (Rhodes, 2012) was a significant theme, leading to a sense of increased personal capacity. In contrast to Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) findings, motivation for engagement with the programme was varied; while the desire for career progression was evident, so too was a sense of moral purpose and a passion for education. The notion of 'purposeful engagement' here, can be seen more as a prerequisite for growth; motivation for committed engagement with the programme facilitated transformations in the aspects of role conceptualisation, identity and personal capacity. In terms of whether the programme influenced career aspirations for either the SLE or the recipient, findings were mixed. Each aspect of professional growth is now discussed in turn, drawing upon the relevant literature.

#### **5.4.1 Role conceptualisation**

In the context of her research, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) asserts that role conceptualisation describes practitioners' understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a school principal; in this study, this is adapted to include an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of middle and senior leaders. An increased understanding was reported by the majority of the participants: most of the SLEs (n=5), all of the head teachers describing changes in the SLEs on their staff (n=3) and half of the middle leader recipients (n=3). For the SLEs, increased understanding included a greater insight into system leadership, recognising the need to be more flexible and improved skills in having 'difficult conversations' and holding members of staff to account. For the recipients, features reported included

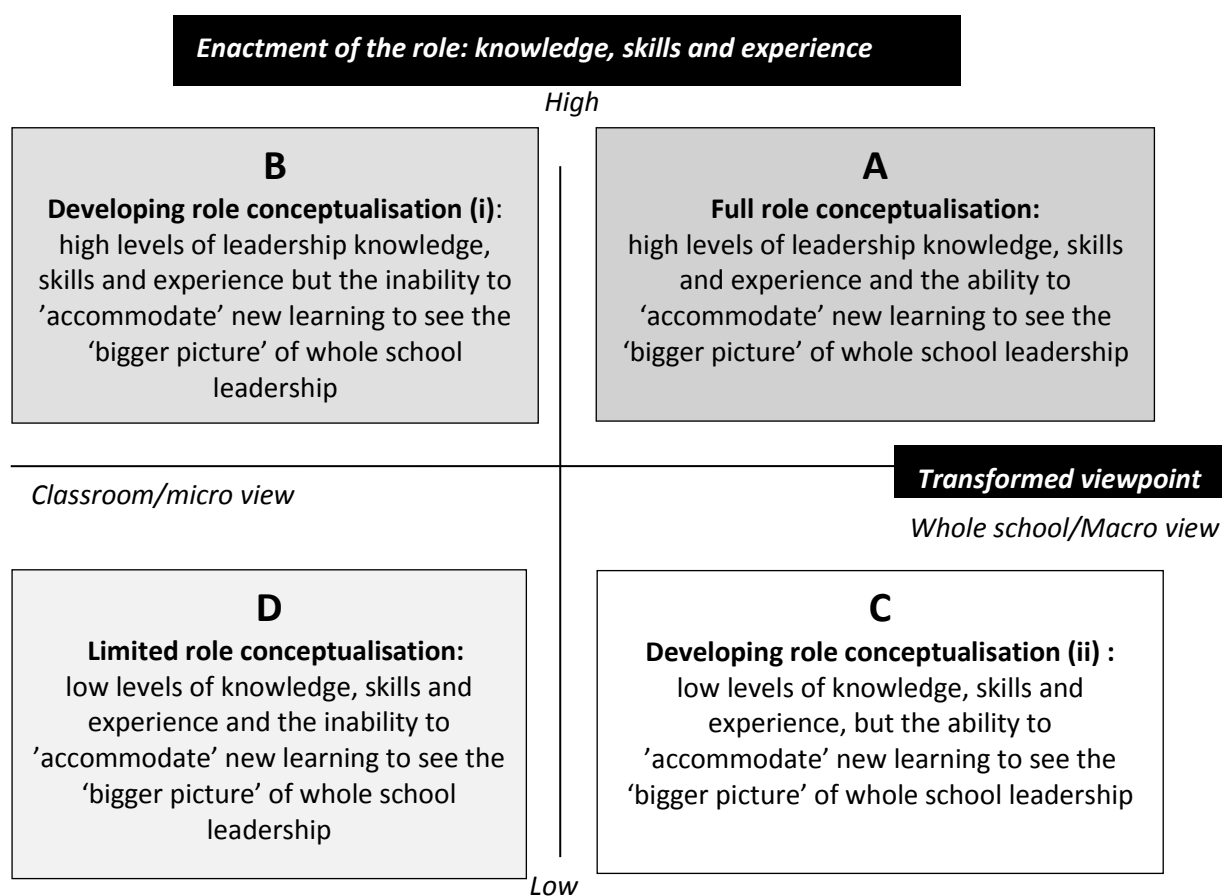
a greater understanding of school performance data, using this to raise pupil achievement, recognising the moral purpose of leadership and improved skills in managing staff. It is worth noting here, that all of these aspects of senior leaders' roles can be regarded as practices of effective leaders (Barber et al., 2010) demonstrating a 'learning-centred' approach with a clear focus on improved pupil outcomes.

While not explicitly describing these as aha moments (Wisker et al., 2009), it was reported that this learning was often a significant 'step'. This has resonance with Wisker et al.'s (2009) notion of 'learning leaps', representing a move beyond comfort zones as participants experience a 'conceptual paradigm shift' (p19). If the notion of a 'learning leap' is explored as 'crossing a threshold concept' (Meyer and Land, 2003), then those characteristics are relevant here. For the SLEs and recipients who expressed an increased understanding of senior leadership roles, this transition could be described as: transformative; irreversible; integrative; bounded and troublesome (Meyer and Land, 2003, pp5-6). For example, once an aspect of a senior leader's role is understood, it is unlikely that it can be forgotten or 'unlearned', leading to a shift in perception. It is likely to be 'interrelated' to existing knowledge and understanding and 'bounded'; 'bordering into new conceptual areas' (Wisker et al., 2009, p19). It may also be regarded as 'troublesome' in terms of being new and 'alien', (Meyer and Land, 2003, p9); for aspiring senior leaders for example, it could be an aspect of their role they find difficult to enact.

In terms of such a 'learning leap' leading to a transformed view point or facilitating a shift in perception, five SLEs noted elements of a change in perception, confirmed by both the manager of the TSA and the head teachers of the SLEs. In congruence with both Browne-Ferrigno (2003) and Crow (2006), one SLE for example, comments that they can now see the school as a 'whole' and identify strengths and weakness more easily. The manager of the TSA perceived that as part of system leadership, the SLEs had a '*wider vision*'. However, perhaps the strongest evidence of a 'conceptual paradigm shift' was reported by the recipients who were middle leaders in schools. Three middle leaders reported a change in perception, with two commenting that they were able to see '*the bigger picture*' (R3:7, R6:9), continuing to suggest that they saw things with a '*different set of eyes*' and from '*a completely different perspective*'. Drawing on the work of Mezirow (1997) and in congruence with findings here, Rhodes (2013) suggests that such transformation of a point of view may occur in a 'stepwise' fashion, which can be aligned to the notion of 'learning leaps' offered by Wisker et al., (2009). Rhodes (2013) continues to suggest that such changes to points of view 'hold much promise as a key locus of transformation' (p7); strengthening the importance of these changes in perception reported by the middle leader recipients. Drawing upon constructive-development theory and the work of Valcea et al. (2011), Rhodes (2013) suggests that new learning might either be 'assimilated' into an existing developmental order, or 'accommodated'; a process through which the existing development order is adjusted to 'fit' the new information and a 'learning leap' occurs. Rhodes' (2013) suggestion that this 'adjustment to a new development order... is indicative of authentic transformation' (p8) for his practitioners undergoing research training, can be applied here to middle leaders

engaged with the SLE programme. In terms of the three middle leaders and three SLEs in this study, it can be suggested that new learning had been ‘accommodated’, leading to a change in outlook; this is demonstrated in figure 5.5 below. Here, the diagram represents a typology that illustrates how such a transformed viewpoint is aligned with a full understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership.

*Figure 5.5: Diagram demonstrating a typology for the enactment of a leadership role and the transformation of viewpoint leading to full conceptualisation of senior leadership roles.*



If the horizontal axis represents a transformed viewpoint to see the ‘bigger picture’ (low to high) and the vertical axis represents the enactment of the role (low to high), then each quadrant represents the level of role conceptualisation that might be understood. For example, recipients **R3:7** and **R8:11**, might have been placed in quadrant B, moving into quadrant A as a result of the SLE deployments as a



transformed view facilitated greater role conceptualisation; this can also be said for the SLEs who reported a wider vision, facilitating greater understanding. However, it can be suggested that recipient **R6:9** moved from quadrant D to C; while a shift in perception was reported as a result of working alongside the SLE, the practical skills and knowledge necessary to enact the role effectively still needed to be consolidated.

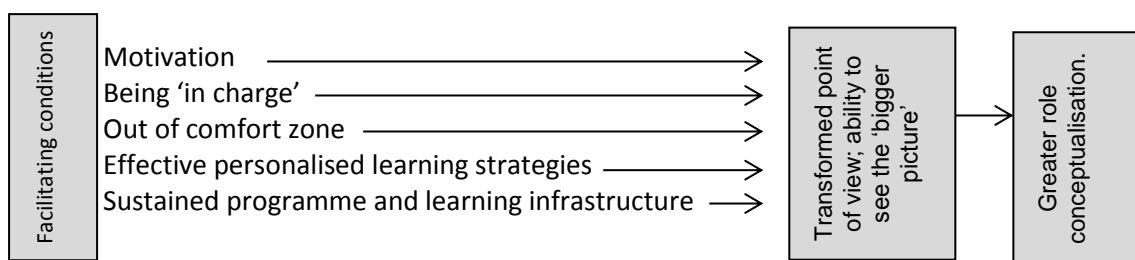
When the concept of 'learning leaps' are explored in the context of leadership development, strategies such as coaching and modelling can be utilised to help individuals 'cross threshold concepts'. Threshold concepts might be in the form of specific knowledge or skills, an aspect of enacting the leadership role or related to an element of school improvement that constitutes a significant step in achieving a greater understanding of senior leadership roles. The findings in this study demonstrate that for the recipients, the SLE's role was vital in facilitating learning leaps where they occurred, utilising coaching and modelling as key strategies. For example, further support in terms of coaching may be required for recipient **R6:9** to overcome the 'troublesome' nature of data analysis in order to move from quadrant C into quadrant A. In addition to this, Rhodes (2013) highlights the problematic nature of 'emotion' as part of the transformation process, suggesting that 'any emotion content as driver or inhibitor of critical reflection and transformation remains elusive and unexplained' (p7). This has resonance with the findings that suggest that the emotional support offered by some SLEs was valuable in terms of supporting and 'driving' any transformations that may have occurred.

While the majority of SLEs and three out of four middle leader recipients reported an increased understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders, some did not (SLEs  $n=2$ , recipients  $n=3$ ). It is therefore useful to explore the possible reasons for this; what factors may be regarded as creating positive circumstances for facilitating 'learning leaps' and what may be seen as limiting factors. Both SLEs who reported that there had been no change in their conceptualisation of senior leadership were already very experienced leaders. One had been teaching for over twenty years with seven years senior leadership experience and had recently been appointed head of school. The other had been teaching for fourteen years and had been part of the leadership team as assistant head at their home school for four years. Both SLEs reported that they had also undertaken school to school support work prior to the SLE appointment. As experienced leaders it would appear that their conceptualisation of the role remained unchanged through the SLE experience.

For the three recipients who reported no change in their understanding of senior leadership roles, the picture is more complex. One recipient (**R5:8**), a curriculum subject and phase leader, perceived themselves to be an experienced leader, having been in the role and a member of the school's senior management team for seven years; this was also confirmed by the recipient head teacher in this school. While both of the other recipients (**R2:7**, **R7:10**) also described lengthy teaching careers (twenty-four and fifteen years) and a great deal of leadership experience, other limiting factors were noted. Both of these recipients were from schools in a 'done to' model; one a programme of support for a school in 'Special Measures' and one an 'audit' or 'health check' of the school, neither had requested specific

SLE deployments. This is in contrast to Barber et al.'s (2010) recognition that learning happens best when adults are 'in charge', 'motivated' and when they are 'at the edge of their comfort zone' (p20). Another limiting factor reported was the 'matching' of the SLE to what was perceived as the needs of the school; it was suggested that the SLEs were sent in '*with a remit that didn't match what we knew..*' (R2:7). Once again, this is in contrast to notion of a needs based, personalised approach to leadership development (NCSL, 2004; Bush, 2008; Dimmock, 2012), the careful matching of coach to coachee (Bush et al., 2007) and Rousseau's (1990) 'psychological contract'. In addition to this, recipient 7:10, expressed that the short nature of the deployment was also a limiting factor; as an audit, the deployment consisted of a minimal number of visits gathering information, rather than a planned programme of work. This is again incongruent to a learning infrastructure with effective processes and systems (Barber et al., 2010). While these limiting factors can be seen as 'restraining' influences on the professional growth of recipients, findings demonstrate that the opposite can be seen as facilitating conditions, enabling a change in perspective and greater role conceptualisation. These include: inherent motivation in requesting the support; feelings of being 'in charge'; being challenged and pushed out of comfort zones; skills, experience and knowledge of the SLE well matched to the needs of the recipient and a sustained programme to meet the objectives of the deployment. When 'role conceptualisation of senior leadership' is considered as one element of professional growth, these facilitating conditions can be presented in the following illustration (see figure 5.6) and can be applied to the leadership learning for both the recipient and the SLE.

*Figure 5.6: Demonstration of facilitating conditions promoting greater role conceptualisation for professional growth.*



#### 5.4.2 Socialisation and role identity transformation

As discussed in section 2.5.2, socialisation theory is increasingly important in understanding the journey to leadership and the formation of a leadership identity (Zhang, 2013). However, it can be regarded as a complex process with many definitions and variations. In the context of Brown-Ferrigno's (2003) study, socialisation was explored through changes in professional behaviours. However, Greenfield (1985a) identifies 'moral and technical' socialisation, while Heck (2003) distinguishes between 'professional' and 'organisational' socialisation. Furthermore, Crow (2006) identifies the four elements of anticipatory, professional, organisation and personal socialisation. As a framework for the discussion of the findings relating to socialisation in the context of professional growth, the concepts of 'professional' and 'personal' socialisation will be drawn upon. Crow (2006) describes 'professional' socialisation as gaining the 'knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to enact the role regardless of setting' (p311) while Zhang (2013) describes this as including 'first hand experiences of leadership and management tasks' and 'modelling and social learning' or 'learning by observing' (p193). 'Personal' socialisation is described as involving a 'change of self identity' (Crow, 2006, p318).

Findings demonstrate that the majority of SLEs (n=6) identified observing and working alongside other senior leaders as a significant element of their leadership learning; for four SLEs this was encountered as part of their SLE work, while the experience of working with leaders in their home school was reported as beneficial for two other SLEs. One SLE (**SLE1:1**) highlighted this as the most influential aspect of the SLE experience on their professional development. This is congruent with the notion that such role models, good and bad, are essential to professional socialisation to observe and learn professional behaviours. (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2009; Zhang and Brundrett, 2010). Furthermore, all of the SLEs were agents of their own participation in the SLE programme; they actively sought the position and undertook a rigorous interview process to be offered the role. This has resonance with Crow's (2006) assertion that the socialisation process is not passive, rather it is a 'reciprocal' process, where the 'individual contributes in an active way' (p195). This notion is expressed by one SLE who described how, through the SLE work, they could evaluate their performance against other leaders to identify where their practice could be improved. The notion of professional socialisation for recipients did not emerge as a strong theme in the findings, with the exception of one recipient who commented that they wanted to be '*more like them* (the SLE)' (**R6:9**). However, while not explicitly articulated by the recipients as an element of professional socialisation, the 'modelling' of leadership activities was identified as being an important strategy for leadership learning as previously discussed in **5.3.2**, as was the necessity of a 'psychological contact' (Rousseau, 1990) for a successful deployment, indicative of a sense of 'working together'.

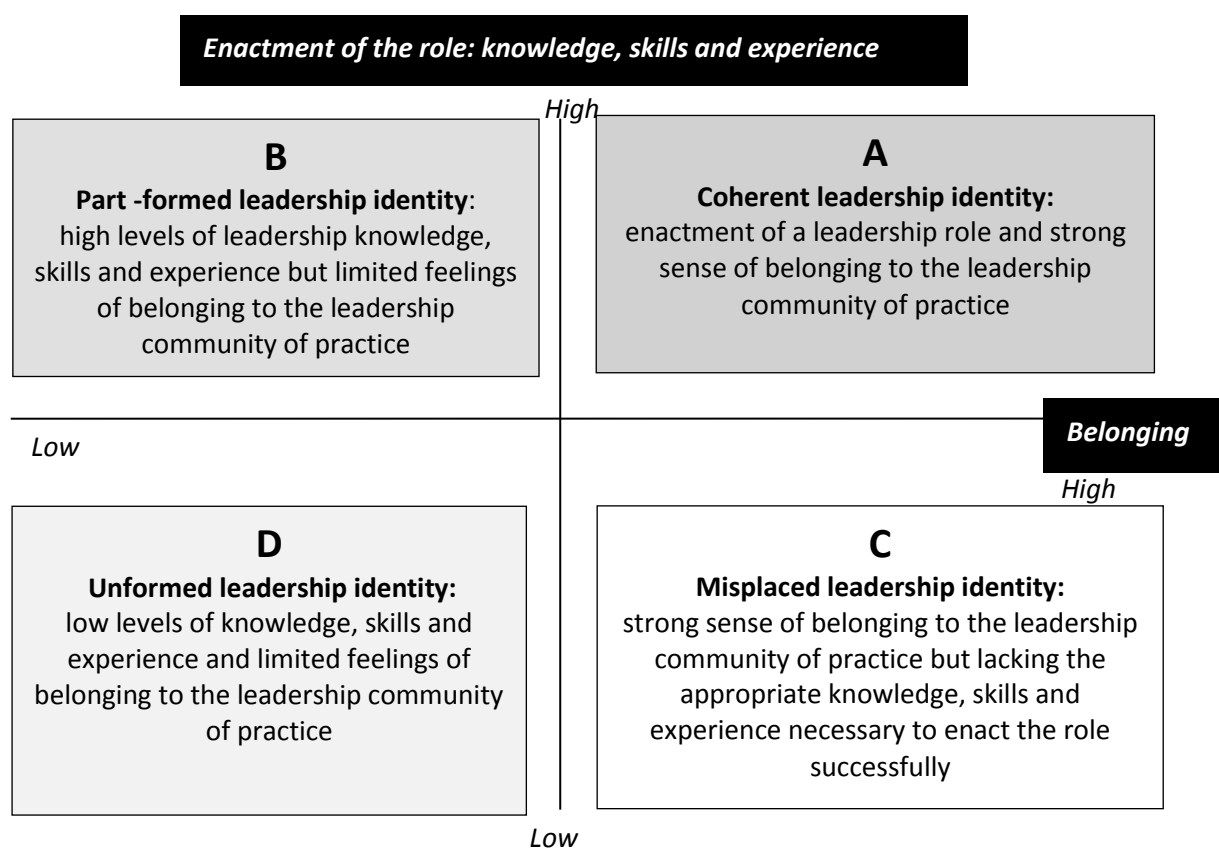
In terms of socialisation experiences and identity transformation, it is argued that identity is ‘the most important aspect’ of a leader’s career development (Hall, 2004). For middle leaders, whose identity is regarded as ‘central’ to their work (Busher, 2005), a coherent professional identity might be particularly problematic when day to day responsibilities might straddle both the class teacher and leadership arenas (Busher, 2005; Dimmock, 2012). The notion of professional identity and how this might change on the journey from middle to senior leadership is therefore significant. Browne-Ferrigno (2003) suggests that identity transformation manifests through a ‘mind-set shift’; a change in perception as if wearing ‘a new pair of glasses’ (p489). Crow (2006) echoes this suggesting a change of identity can ‘include identifying with the larger view of schools’ (p318), beyond the classroom. However, as discussed in **5.4.1** such a change also facilitates greater role conceptualisation as learning leaps are made. In addition to seeing the ‘bigger picture’ of the school, a point of interest reported in the findings was how engagement with the SLE programme changed the perception of how other members of staff viewed the SLEs. In line with Gronn’s (1996) ‘public displays’ of skills during the ‘accession’ phase, one SLE reported that their *‘credibility had gone up’* when taking on the role (**SLE3:2**), with a head teacher saying of her SLEs; *‘it has raised the status of where they are’* (**HSLEa:1**).

However, It is suggested that inherent in the concept of identity is a sense of ‘belonging’ to a social context or group, strengthening the significance of socialisation experiences (Wenger, 1988; Griffiths, 1993; Komives, et al., 2009). For one middle leader recipient the change in identity was expressed as more than a shift in perception. The work undertaken with the SLE coincided with a move out

of class and out of their comfort zone; the recipient commented, *'now I am not a class teacher, I am a leader'* (R8:11). This demonstrates a clear movement towards being part of and belonging to a community of leaders, rather than teachers. This is in contrast to Busher (2005) who, in his research, suggests that middle leaders 'did not locate themselves as part of the management echelon of the school' rather they identified with the teachers (p148). It is clear however, that this recipient did feel that they 'belonged' to a group of leaders. This has resonance with Griffiths (1993) who asserts that the notion of identity takes into account the experiences of 'wanting or not wanting, being allowed or not being allowed to belong' (p306); the move out of class for this teacher was clearly significant in fostering feelings of 'belonging'. However, work with the SLE also contributed to this transformation as the recipient comments, *'I went into it (the SLE deployment) in terms of phonics for the school but I perhaps wasn't intending that how personally, it has developed me...'* (R8:11). The importance of the sense of 'belonging' in relation to identity can be represented in the diagram below (figure 5.7). If the horizontal axis represents feelings of 'belonging' (low to high) and the vertical axis represents the enactment of the role (low to high), then each quadrant represents how leadership identity might be formed. Initially, it could be suggested that R8 was located in quadrant D, but the move out of class and the professional development experienced through the SLE deployment facilitated a move into quadrant A. This typology is a useful tool to consider how other participants or indeed, other aspiring leaders may be supported in achieving a more coherent leadership identity. Indeed, other participants can also be plotted on this typology. Two SLEs who were experienced leaders on being designated SLEs could be described as having 'coherent leadership identities', while the others, who with

high levels of knowledge and skills reported that the socialisation process, working alongside other leaders was key to their professional development; as Heck (2003) suggests, socialisation is the 'process through which one becomes a member of the profession' (p240). This demonstrates a move from B to A through engagement with the programme.

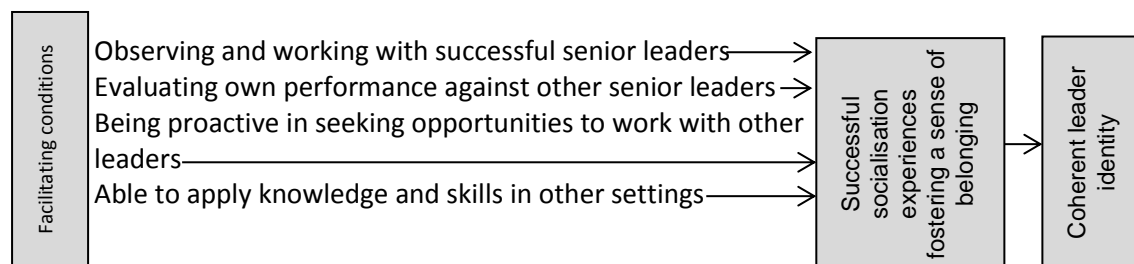
*Figure 5.7: Diagram demonstrating a typology for the enactment of a leadership role, 'belonging' to the leadership community of practice and leadership identity.*



The concept of 'role identity transformation' as an element of 'professional growth', can be represented in figure 5.8. Here facilitating conditions identified in the findings and in the literature are summarised. Given that professional identity is regarded as a key aspect of leadership development (Hall, 2004; Busher, 2005), how the transformative process of gaining a coherent leadership identity can be facilitated through socialisation experiences and nurtured through a sense of belonging is of significance.



*Figure 5.8: Demonstration of the facilitating conditions promoting socialisation for professional growth.*



### 5.4.3 Self belief

While Browne-Ferrigno (2003) identified the four main themes of role conceptualisation, socialisation, role identity transformation and purposeful engagement as aspects of professional growth, a further element of 'self belief' is added here. Emerging as an important theme in the findings, it is also identified as a crucial aspect of professional development in the literature (Mezirow, 1978; Gronn, 1999; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Rhodes, 2012). For example, Mezirow (1978) suggests that 'self confidence' is needed for 'perspective transformation' and that this can be achieved through 'an increased sense of competency' (p107) while Gronn (1999) asserts that self belief is an 'important internal precondition' to achieve one's potential (p36). While 'self belief' is regarded as necessary for career progression the management of this and how it can be promoted has been neglected (Rhodes, 2012); indeed, within the new NCTL leadership curriculum (NCTL, 2013b), between the themes of 'educational excellence', 'operational management' and 'strategic leadership', it would appear there is no mention of developing self belief to support an aspiring leader in undertaking senior leadership roles.

There are several definitions of 'self belief', and at times, language such as 'self belief', 'self confidence' and 'self efficacy' is used interchangeably. It is therefore, useful to clarify what is meant as a basis for critically exploring the findings of this study. Rhodes (2012) suggests that the term 'self belief' encapsulates the notions of 'self-confidence', 'self-esteem' and 'self-efficacy'. He comments that the 'active management' of this can have a significant positive influence on the development of leaders in terms of:

*'success in socialisation and belonging, perseverance in the face of challenges, successful identity transformation and practical and emotional resilience to allow the subsequent enactment of leadership'* (Rhodes, 2012, p9).

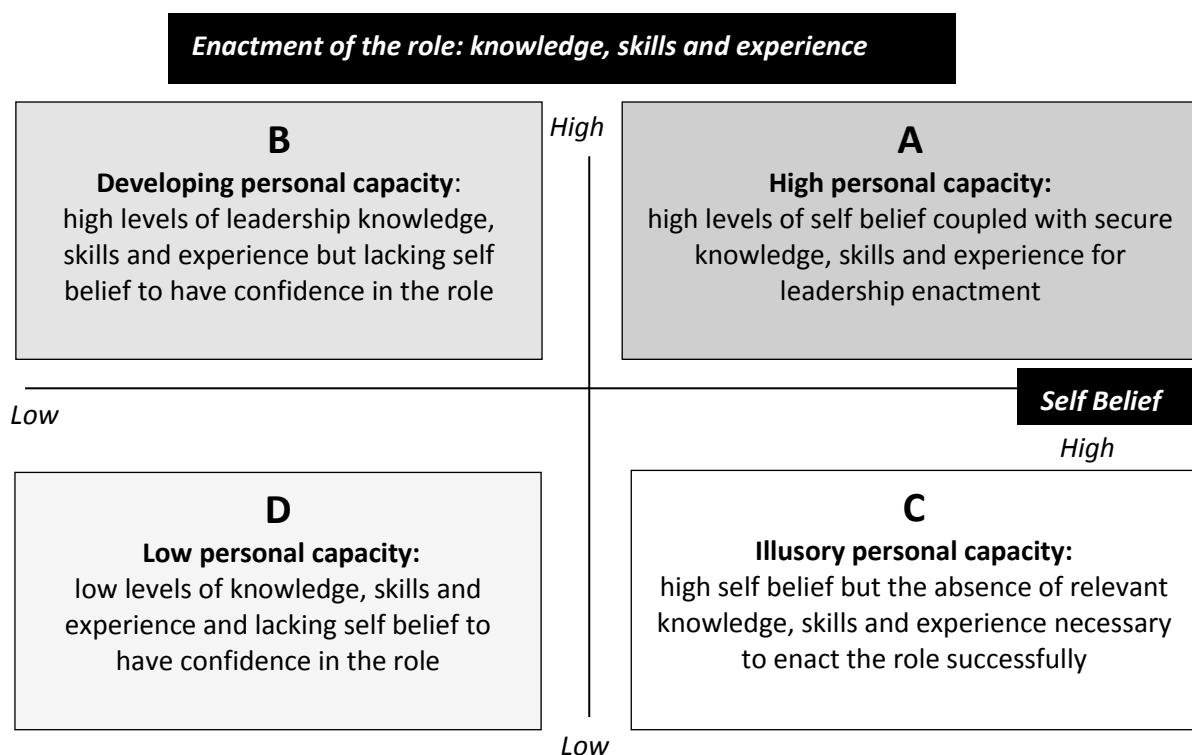
Using this definition, in this study the majority of SLEs (n=6) reported an increase in self belief; this was also noted by their head teachers (n=3) and the head of the TSA. The SLEs reported increased self belief in terms of:

- *working with new, larger numbers of staff;*
- *having 'difficult' professional conversations;*
- *working in challenging situations;*
- *moving beyond comfort zones and*
- *feelings of 'next time I can do it better'.*

In agreement with Rhodes (2012) such reports of increased self belief also imply notions of increased self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-esteem, which underpin the desire of some SLEs to seek promotion and further leadership roles. A term that can be seen to encapsulate the notion of self belief is that of 'personal capacity', reflecting an individual's belief and confidence in their ability and capacity to enact the professional role successfully. In terms of senior leadership roles, this is also underpinned by the knowledge, skills and experiences necessary for leadership enactment; this can be demonstrated by the typology shown in figure

5.9. If the horizontal axis represents 'self belief'(low to high) and the vertical axis represents the enactment of the role (low to high), then each quadrant represents the 'personal capacity' of an individual. The findings suggest that for SLEs, increased self confidence led to increased 'personal capacity' with the desire to secure improved performance in future SLE deployments, to seek promotion for further leadership roles and to move beyond their 'comfort zone', representing a move from quadrant B to A. The one SLE who did not report any increase in self belief was already an established and experienced senior leader (head of school) and could be placed in quadrant A prior to any deployments.

*Figure 5.9: Diagram representing 'personal capacities' based on knowledge, skills and experience and self belief.*

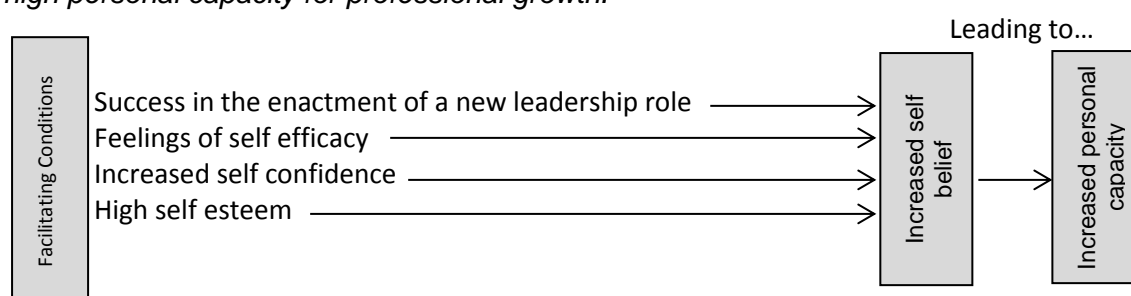


Such an increase in personal capacity was not reflected to the same extent in recipient responses. However, where it was reported (n=2), there was a significant effect on the personal capacities of these middle leaders, who commented that they felt '*empowered*' and able to undertake the role '*on their own*' after the SLE

deployments; demonstrating a move from quadrant B to A. Of the remaining seven recipients, three were head teachers (already in quadrant A), two perceived that the deployments were not successful and one demonstrated high levels of self-belief as an established and confident middle leader (quadrant A). For one recipient however, while the modelling of leadership activities, such as lesson observations and monitoring had been regarded as valuable, working alongside the SLE had in fact undermined their self confidence in relation to the particular aspect of school performance and pupil data analysis. This could be viewed as ‘troublesome’ knowledge (Meyer and Land, 2003) for this recipient (**R6:9**), who was unable to make a ‘learning leap’ (Wisker et al., 2009) to fully understand the complexities of the school data to be able to use it effectively and with confidence, remaining in quadrant D.

The findings demonstrate that for the majority of the SLEs and two recipients, engagement with the programme increased their self belief, and consequently their personal capacity to undertake senior leadership roles. Given the recognition of the importance of self belief in career progression and professional growth, and in agreement with Rhodes (2012), the question of how this can be managed and promoted more widely in the journey to leadership is significant and is worthy of further study. However, figure 5.10 offers a summary of the facilitating conditions based on the findings in this study.

*Figure 5.10: Demonstration of the facilitating conditions encouraging self belief, leading to high personal capacity for professional growth.*



#### **5.4.4 Purposeful engagement**

Browne-Ferrigno (2003) suggests that professional growth can also be explored through the notion of purposeful engagement with the programme; was any difference noted in the level of engagement with those aspiring to headship and those not? Do the participants feel as though they have progressed further along the journey to senior leadership? Has engagement with the programme affected any change in the participants (SLEs and recipients) in terms of their career aspirations? However, in light of the findings in this study, rather than an aspect of professional growth that might be considered in the same was as role conceptualisation, leadership identity and personal capacity, purposeful engagement with the programme might better be viewed as a prerequisite for growth, facilitating and driving transformation in these three aspects; where purposeful engagement was lacking, it was perceived that professional growth did not occur.

In her study, Browne-Ferrigno (2003) asserts that the influence of working towards a 'specific career goal' was evident in her findings and that participants who had career aspirations 'committed time and energy to their learning' (p491). She continues to suggest that by the end of the programme, 'learner engagement differed markedly...' (p496). In terms of the SLEs in this study, only two explicitly expressed career progression as their motivation for applying for the role. Other reasons included: a moral commitment to social justice for children; passion for teaching; a more general interest in leadership and the perception that they were doing the job anyway, without a formal title. In contrast to Brown-Ferrigno's (2003) findings however, this did not appear to influence their commitment or

engagement. The motivation, passion and enthusiasm for the role was evident in the responses of all SLEs with the exception of one who perceived that in practice the role was not what they had anticipated as an established senior leader. For the recipients, where schools had requested support, the decision to approach the TSA had involved the head teacher and the leadership team of the school with a focus on a wider improvement objective; there was not necessarily a personal motivation, based on career aspirations. Where schools had not requested the support, this was even less so. However, the findings suggest that once again, in contrast to Browne-Ferrigno (2003) the lack of specific career goals did not affect the recipients commitment to the deployment, or levels of engagement; the recipient who reported the greatest changes in conceptualisation of senior leadership, their professional identity and sense of belonging asserted, *'I am quite enjoying it in a funny sort of way, not that I want to be a head or anything like that'* (R8:11). While other limiting factors (discussed in 5.4.1) did affect the level of recipient engagement and commitment, it would seem that the lack of specific career goals did not. To summarise, purposeful engagement with the programme was underpinned by a moral commitment for social justice, a passion for teaching, personal and organisational agency, enchantment with leadership and recognising system wide opportunities.

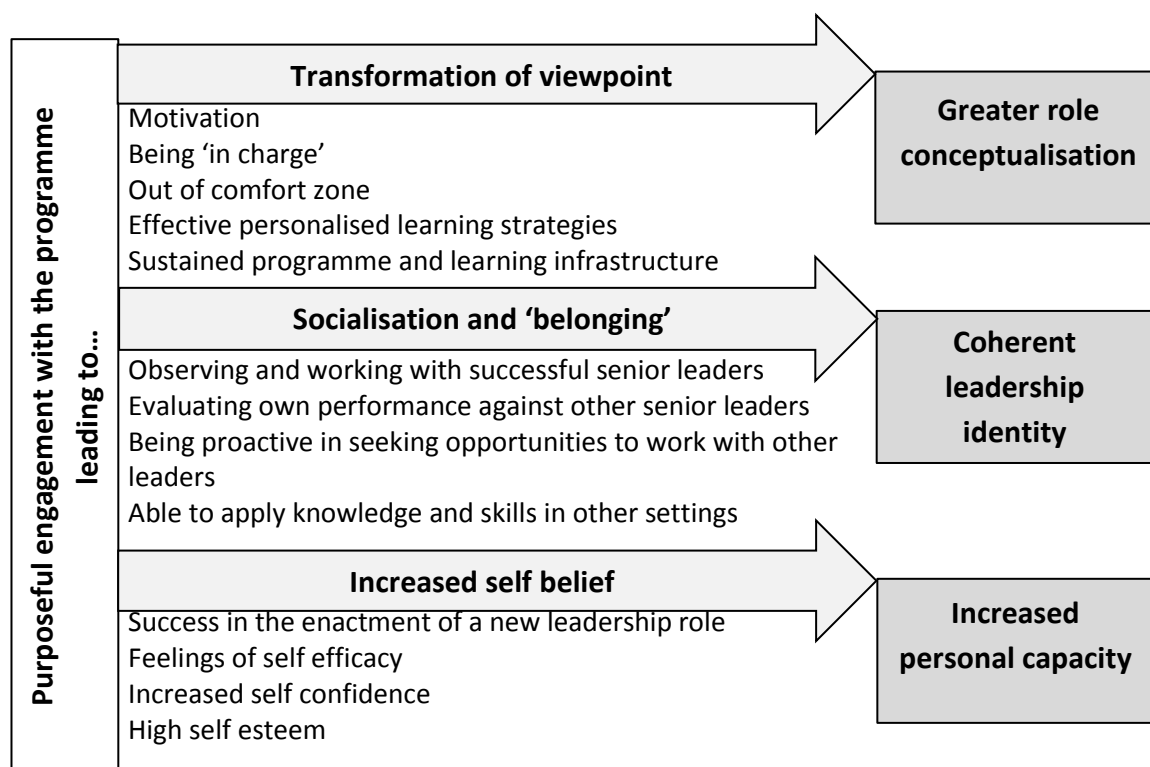
Gronn (1999) suggests that in the journey to senior leadership, the 'accession' stage is a time of preparation where leadership roles are rehearsed and the potential capacity to lead is tested; he asserts that it is a time marked by 'various forms of public display by leadership rookies' (p36). Similarly, Gunter (2001) offers that accession is a time of preparation and 'positioning' to be a leader. Does the

SLE programme offer the opportunities to rehearse role, test capacities and prepare for senior leadership? Do participants feel further along the accession stage, closer to incumbency (Gronn, 1999)? Almost half of the SLEs (n=3) perceived that engagement with the programme had moved them along towards senior leadership positions, while another expressed a greater enchantment with their career. Two of the remaining three SLEs were already heads of school at the time of interview. For the recipients who were middle leaders, where schools had requested the deployment, the majority (n=3) also perceived that they were further along the journey and changes in career aspirations were expressed, in terms of: recognising career opportunity across schools (system leadership); increased self confidence to apply for leadership roles; self belief in believing they may have something to offer other schools (discussed in **5.4.5**) and viewing the SLE as a positive leadership role model.

#### **5.4.5 The research question addressed**

To address the research question, '*What professional growth may have occurred for the recipient/the SLE as a result of the SLE deployment?*' the key elements of professional growth are explored. However, rather than adopting Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) framework of the four key aspects of: role conceptualisation, socialisation, role identity transformation and purposeful engagement, the findings in this study have necessitated a reworking of it (see figure 5.11).

Figure 5.11 A new conceptualisation of professional growth



Here, rather than an aspect of professional growth, purposeful engagement is seen as a prerequisite for it; where this was lacking in the findings, it was perceived that professional growth did not occur. In contrast to Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) findings, the majority of SLEs and recipients who had requested the SLE deployments, engaged purposefully with the programme regardless of any specific career goals; rather, motivations included passion for teaching and a moral commitment to social justice for all children. More than half of the SLEs and half of the middle leader recipients perceived that engagement with the programme had furthered their career, moving towards senior leadership positions. In terms of 'role conceptualisation', the majority of participants (both SLEs and recipients) reported a significant, stepwise change in their understanding. This is in line with Wisker et al.'s (2009) notion of 'learning leaps' in conceptual understanding based on the work of Meyer and Land (2003). Where learning leaps occurred, there was also



evidence of a 'transformed point of view', enabling participants to see the 'bigger picture' of their organisation. This has resonance with Mezirow's (1997) work on the learning process as the transformation of 'points of view', in line with Rhode's (2013) suggestion that such changes hold much importance as a 'key locus of transformation' (p7). Where participants expressed that there had been 'no change' in their understanding, 'limiting' factors were identified. In congruence with Zhang (2013), the process of 'socialisation' was regarded as vital for SLEs in their professional growth; the value of working alongside other leaders was highlighted as a key aspect of professional and personal development. Given the significance of a sense of belonging to a particular group or community to the formation of professional identity (Griffiths, 1993), such socialisation experiences can be seen as important nurturing a sense of belonging and leadership identity. A further significant finding was the increased notion of 'self belief', particularly for the SLEs. Findings demonstrate that SLEs reported feelings of increased confidence and the self belief that they could 'do better next time'; coupled with their knowledge, skills and experiences, this could be described as increased 'personal capacity' to enact senior leadership roles in different contexts.

#### **5.5 Research Question 4: How can the SLE experience be modified in order to best achieve its desired outcomes?**

To consider how the SLE experience might be modified in order to best achieve the desired outcomes, it is useful to review the tensions around the role that were reported by the SLEs, recipients and other participants to explore why these may have been limiting factors in achieving the expected outcomes or in promoting professional growth. Where successes were reported, the positive conditions that facilitated leadership learning and the achievement of the aims also need

consideration to shape suggestions for improvements. To briefly summarise, tensions around the role include: mixed response to the formal training offered; the process of matching of SLEs to schools; lack of financial incentive for schools and personally for SLEs; workload of SLEs and conflicting loyalties between the home and recipient school. However, successes include: perceived achievement of curriculum aims and raised pupil performance; professional growth of participants and the heightening of the schools' reputations.

### **5.5.1 Tensions**

As discussed in **5.3.1**, there was a mixed response to the formal training offered by the NCTL on entry to the SLE position. This was very much a prescribed, standardised approach although in addition to the compulsory modules, further elements were elective. In line with Bush et al. (2007) and Dimmock (2012) some kind of needs analysis prior to the training might have ensured that participants, especially those who were experienced leaders, felt that the training was better matched to their expectations and requirements. Similarly, the greatest tension expressed was the 'matching' of SLEs to schools. Where schools had requested specific support, the brokering and matching process appeared to be successful; the skills and level of leadership experience and the subject specific knowledge of the SLEs were in alignment with the needs of the recipient school. This facilitated the perceived achievement of the deployment objectives and fostered the professional growth of the recipient. However, in the 'done to' model, this was not necessarily the case; a number of limiting factors emerged for both the recipient and the SLE. Discussed in **5.4.1**, and in contrast to Barber et al.'s (2010) features of how adults learn best, these include: lack of 'motivation'; not feeling 'in charge';

not stretched or ‘pushed out of comfort zone’ and lack of clear learning systems and infrastructure. While this has been learnt from and addressed by the TSA, the head of the TSA expressed the difficulties inherent in this process, reporting that the cohort of SLEs have ‘*very mixed experiences*’ and that ‘*matching is a challenge*’.

Another tension reported was the lack of financial incentive; the head of the TSA points out that ‘*there is no money in Teaching Schools*’ and that income must be largely self-generated. While SLEs do not receive any personal remuneration for undertaking the role, the home school can now claim an agreed fee for the time their SLE spends out of school. However, they must commit to losing their member of staff for an indefinite number of days a year and must have the capacity to facilitate this. The opportunity for SLEs to work outside of their home school therefore, largely depends upon the school’s commitment to ‘system’ leadership and an adherence to the Secretary of State’s vision that:

*‘At the heart of this Government’s vision for education is a determination to give school leaders more power and control. Not just to drive improvement in their own schools – but to drive improvement across our whole education system. This policy is driven, like all our education policy, by our guiding moral purpose – the need to raise attainment for all children and close the gap between the richest and poorest’* (Barnes and Gore, 2012, p3).

However, while the SLE receives no personal income for the new role, it can also be argued that the policy is driven by economic restrictions and the demise of local authorities who traditionally would have supplied such support to schools at a cost to the Government; in other words it could be described as professional development ‘on the cheap’. Despite the lack of financial incentive for SLEs, the role inevitably creates additional workload and possible conflicting loyalties

between their SLE commitment and their home school; this was noted as a concern by all the head teachers of SLEs (n=3) and expressed by one of the recipients, who reported that the SLE was '*stressed*' when they got there (R1:7). However, only one SLE commented their '*hell of an extra workload*' (SE2:1). 'System' leadership is a relatively new concept and while there is literature extolling the benefits (Matthews et al., 2011; Fullan, 2011), there is little research available exploring the emotional costs to the individuals or indeed, the home school, of providing school to school support where there is little financial recompense for the time out. While this is the nature of the of the SLE programme and indeed system leadership, there can be little suggested in terms of modifications, other than, as suggested by one recipient, that SLEs come from schools that '*truly have the capacity to let those people come*' (R1:7).

### 5.5.2 Successes

In line with literature that suggests leadership learning is most powerful in the context of wider school improvement objectives, (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007; Barber et al., 2010), three recipient schools perceived that such improvement outcomes had been achieved; this was in terms of raised standards in phonics, a change in the content and pedagogy of maths teaching and the embedding of a writing initiative across the school. In addition to this, as discussed in 5.4 aspects of professional growth were reported by both SLEs and recipients. Furthermore, two of the three head teachers of SLEs described benefits to the home school, as anticipated by the Government; one such example was the recognition of 'talent' at the school, strengthening their reputation in the TSA and wider community.

### 5.5.3 The research question addressed

Based on exploring the tensions and successes of the deployments within the framework of relevant literature, modifications in order to best achieve the desired outcomes of the SLE experience can be suggested as:

- *participant 'needs analysis' prior to the initial training to ensure a more personalised experience;*
- *careful matching of the skills and experiences of SLEs to the needs of the recipient school to ensure that the preferred conditions for learning and achieving the wider improvement objectives are facilitated;*
- *ensuring that SLEs are appointed from schools who realistically have the capacity to manage without them to avoid over burdening the SLE and 'burn out' of the individual.*

In addition to these suggestions, other modifications were offered by the participants. These include:

- *undertaking a deployment in pairs so that SLEs can 'bounce ideas off each other';*
- *opportunities for SLEs to 'shadow' other SLEs to learn from their practice;*
- *greater dialogue and communication between the head teacher and the TSA as deployments are brokered and evaluated to ensure that the head teachers feel 'part of the loop'.*

## CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter key tenets from the 'Findings' (**Chapter 4**) and 'Discussion' (**Chapter 5**) chapters are reviewed in the light of their contribution to knowledge. Following this, implications are discussed; why is this work important and to whom might it be of interest? In addition, suggestions for further work are noted as well as recommendations for practice within the SLE role. The work concludes with a final summary.

### 6.2 Contribution to knowledge

In addressing the research questions several key tenets emerged, drawn from the findings and the relevant literature. These are a new framework for leadership learning that demonstrates learning both across schools (for the SLE) and within (for the recipient) leading to a new conceptualisation of professional growth. Within this the elements of role conceptualisation, professional identity and personal capacity are explored; the facilitating conditions for each are also considered. In addition to this, typologies are offered highlighting the significance of a 'transformed view' in promoting greater role conceptualisation, a sense of 'belonging' for identity formation and self belief leading to increased 'personal capacity' for professional growth. Furthermore, modifications to best achieve expected outcomes for the role are also suggested.

In addressing the question '*How is leadership learning within the SLE deployment conceptualised in different schools?*' successful features of leadership

development activities were drawn upon in the literature in terms of content (Bush, 2008; NCTL, 2013a), processes (Hanbury, 2009; Matthews et al., 2010; Zhang, 2013) and context (Bush and Middlewood, 2005; Pegg, 2007; Barber et al., 2010). Based upon these and successful elements identified in the findings, 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning' is offered as a new conceptualisation for leadership development. This reflects how leadership learning is conceptualised in successful SLE deployments and proposes that:

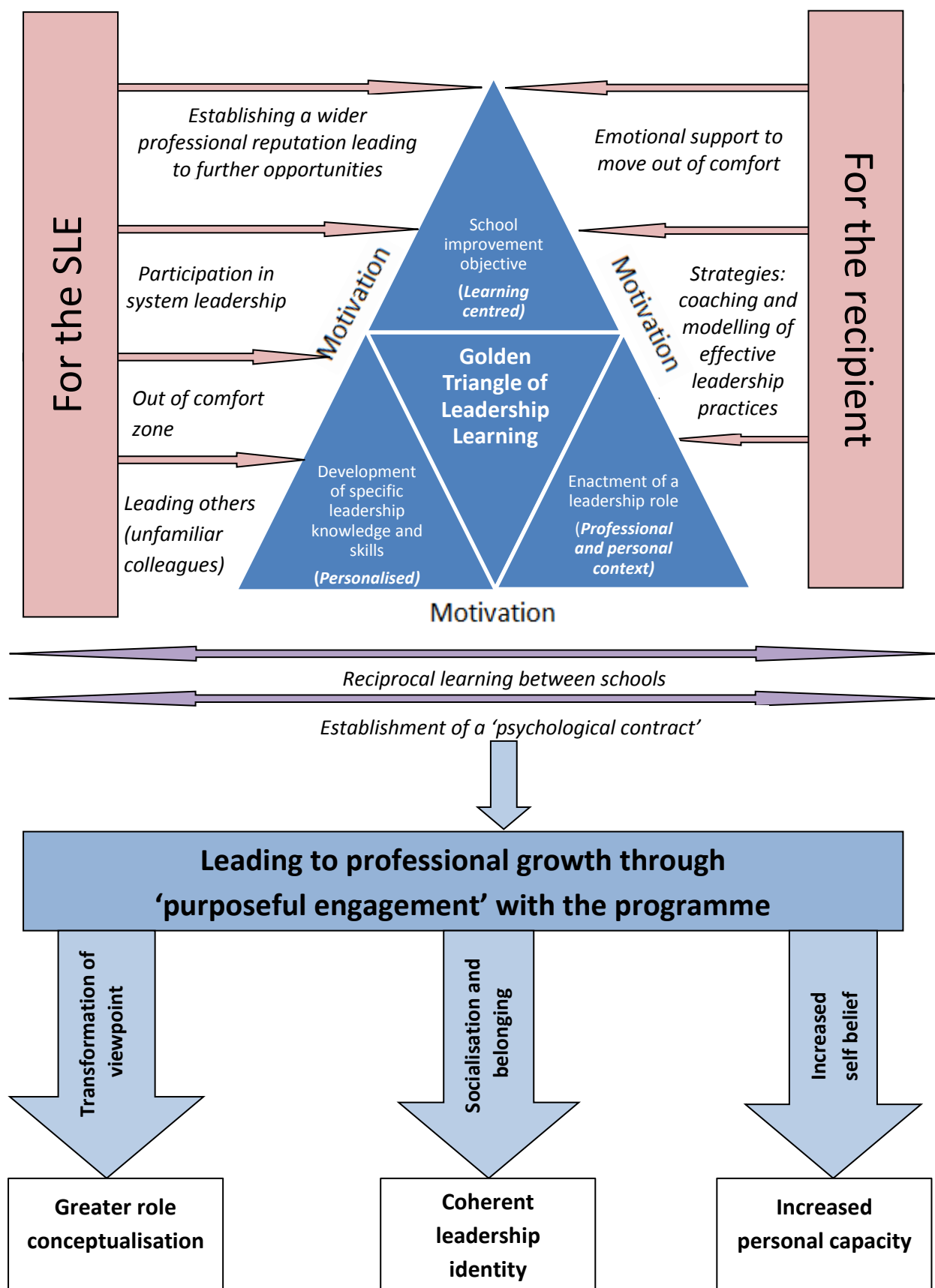
- *new knowledge and skills learnt should be 'personalised' and matched to the needs of the participant;*
- *leadership learning should occur through the enactment of a leadership role, taking into account the participant's professional and personal context and providing the opportunity to lead;*
- *leadership learning should occur through the wider aims of school improvement objectives, reflecting a 'learning centred' approach.*

In answer to the question, *'How has the deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?'* the 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning' (see figure 6.1) builds upon earlier illustrations (figures 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4) and demonstrates how learning is facilitated for both the SLE and the recipients. For the SLE, the elements of: participation in 'system' leadership; performing out of their comfort zone; leading others and reciprocal learning from other schools are included. Here, participants are enacting a new leadership role (as an SLE), gaining new knowledge, developing new skills and driving forward school improvement outside of their home school. Demonstrating their leadership credibility (Gronn, 1999) in turn provides opportunities for further work in schools as their reputation develops. This not only represents how leadership learning is facilitated for the SLE, but also how leadership learning might be facilitated for any leader involved in 'lateral' or 'system' leadership; a key aspect of current

Government policy (Department for Education, 2010). For the recipient, the 'emotional' support offered by the SLE is also included. Building upon the work of Crawford (2007), this can be regarded as a vital element in supporting leadership development, as the recipient steps out of their comfort zone, to undertake their leadership role. In addition to this, coaching and modelling are highlighted as effective strategies for leadership learning, facilitating 'learning leaps'. Engagement with the SLE programme also provides the opportunity for the recipient to benefit from reciprocal learning between schools as professional relationships are established. For both the SLE and the recipient the notion of 'stepping out of a comfort zone' emerged as important aspect of leadership learning. In addition to this, the 'psychological contract' (Rousseau, 1990) established between the SLE and their recipient was also significant in the success of the deployment. Underpinning this new conceptualisation of leadership learning is 'motivation'; the 'inclination towards an activity' (Evans, 1998, p34). The absence of motivation to engage with the programme had a negative impact on the facilitation of leadership learning. This illustration (figure 6.1) also demonstrates how successful leadership learning and purposeful engagement with the programme can lead to professional growth.



Figure 6.1: A new conceptualisation of leadership learning leading to professional growth.



To address the question, *'What professional growth may have occurred for the recipient/SLE as a result of the SLE deployment?'* a new conceptualisation of professional growth is offered. Initially drawing upon the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003) this includes the elements of: purposeful engagement, role conceptualisation, identity and, in addition, personal capacity. However, rather than exploring the professional growth of individuals as they prepare for headship, this framework is applied to middle leaders as they move towards becoming senior leaders and is re-worked based on the findings in this study. Here, commonalities can be identified in the findings with those of Browne-Ferrigno (2003). These include greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders with little change in the professional behaviours of experienced leaders. Similarly, a 'mind-set shift' was reported by some participants; however, rather than indicative of identity transformation, the findings here suggest that such a transformation of perception contributed to greater role conceptualisation. Alternatively, socialisation experiences and a sense of 'belonging' were significant for professional growth and identity formation. While the framework for transformation offered by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) consists of four elements, here, 'self belief' is added as a significant finding, leading to increased personal capacity of some participants. In addition, while Browne-Ferrigno (2003) noted that 'those with clearly defined post-program goals showed the most evidence of sustained engagement' (p496) in this study a long term career goal or lack of it, did not affect engagement. Rather, motivations included a passion for teaching and a moral commitment; such purposeful engagement with the programme was vital for professional growth to occur. Each of these aspects is explored and built upon

with evidence from the findings to establish facilitating conditions that can be utilised to support the professional growth of middle leaders.

In terms of 'role conceptualisation', findings demonstrate that in agreement with the literature, the strategies of coaching and modelling were regarded as successful in facilitating a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership. Where a greater understanding was acknowledged, this appeared to have occurred in a 'step-like' way. While Wisker et al. (2009) draw on the work of Meyer and Land (2003) to conceive the notion of 'learning leaps' and apply this to the transformational journey of doctoral researchers, here, the model is applied to the learning of middle leaders moving towards senior leadership roles. Where greater role conceptualisation was reported, so too was a transformed point of view. Closely aligned to Mezirow's (1997) 'frames of reference', Browne-Ferrigno (2003) asserts that this can be described as a 'mind-set shift' as though an individual has a 'new pair of glasses'; this was confirmed in this study as participants described being able to 'see the bigger picture'. However, rather than demonstrating transformed identity (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003), findings reported here contribute more significantly to greater role conceptualisation. A typology is therefore offered (figure 5.5), demonstrating how high levels of leadership knowledge, skills and experience, coupled with transformed view of the wider organisation can lead to greater role conceptualisation. However, while in the findings, greater role conceptualisation was coupled with a change in perspective, this warrants further study as discussed in **6.3**. Does greater conceptualisation occur as a result of transformation of perception or does deeper understanding facilitate a change in perspective?

Building on the literature pertinent to how adults best learn, further facilitating conditions to advance role conceptualisation are offered. These include: feelings of motivation; being in charge of learning; working outside of a 'comfort zone'; a sustained programme of learning and the appropriate learning infrastructure within the organisation.

Drawing on socialisation theory as an aspect of professional growth (Heck, 2003; Crow, 2006; Zhang, 2013), the concepts of 'professional' and 'personal' socialisation are built upon. Described as 'learning by observing' (Zhang, 2013, p193), professional socialisation relates to gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to enact the role regardless of setting (Crow, 2006), whereas 'personal' socialisation reflects a change in self identity (Crow, 2006). Findings demonstrate that the process of socialisation was regarded as vital by SLEs, reporting that the opportunity to work alongside other senior leaders as peers was a key feature of their development. In terms of 'personal' socialisation, the concept of 'identity' is a vital aspect of professional growth. The relevant literature describes the formation of identity as an ongoing process, resulting in a changing concept of the professional self as careers progress (Beijaard et al., 2004; Crow, 2006; Komives et al., 2009; Rhodes and Greenway, 2010). Findings suggest that the transformation of role identity is more complex than being able to see the 'bigger picture' as though with 'a new pair of glasses' (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) and may also rely upon feelings of 'belonging'. The notion of 'belonging' as an inherent aspect of identity is well documented in the literature (Wenger, 1988; Griffiths, 1993; Busher, 2005; Komives et al., 2009). Building upon this work and the findings of this study, a typology is offered (see figure 5.7) demonstrating the

notion of leadership identity in terms of enactment of the role and a sense of belonging. Participants in this study can be placed within this typology. While more experienced senior leaders initially demonstrated a 'coherent leadership identity', others did not. For one skilled middle leader a move out of the classroom coupled with the support of the SLE saw a move from 'part-formed' to 'coherent' leadership identity; already described as highly skilled by their head teacher, it was the feeling of 'belonging' to the leadership community that was crucial to this transformation. This is particularly of significance for middle leaders where there may be some dissonance between their role in both the leadership and classroom arenas. The sense of belonging also has resonance with the process of professional socialisation; for SLEs the opportunity to work alongside other senior leaders and become part of this community of practice was significant. To advance professional growth in terms of the socialisation process, several facilitating features are noted. These are: observing and working with other senior leaders; evaluating own performance against others and acting to improve; being proactive in seeking opportunities and being able to utilise the skills and knowledge gained in other settings.

In addition to the four aspects of professional growth offered by Brown-Ferrigno (2003), the concept of 'self belief' emerged from the findings as important and is included here. Drawing upon the definition offered by Rhodes (2012), 'self belief' encapsulates the notions of self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The literature suggests that self belief is crucial for career progression (Gronn, 1999; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; Rhodes, 2012) and is vital to facilitate both 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1978) and 'learning leaps' (Wisker et al.,

2009). While the majority of SLEs and three out of four the middle leader recipients reported increased self belief after engagement with the programme the extent to which it facilitates other aspects of professional growth remains elusive and warrants further work (discussed in **6.3**). Rather, a typology to drawing upon the notions of self belief and the levels of leadership knowledge, skills and experience for increased personal capacity is offered (figure 5.9). In terms of the participants in this study, the majority of SLEs and two recipients appeared to move from 'developing' to 'high' personal capacity demonstrated by an increase in their self belief and their desire to undertake further challenging roles. Building on the literature relating to self belief and these findings, facilitating elements that may foster increased self belief are noted. These are: success in the enactment of a new role; feelings of self-efficacy; increased self-confidence and high self esteem. However, while these are noted as contributory factors, demonstrating exactly how these foster an increased sense of self belief necessitates further study (see **6.3**); does high self belief facilitate the enactment of a new, challenging role or does success in the role foster feelings of self belief?

In exploring the concept of 'purposeful engagement' as an aspect of professional growth, in contrast to the findings of Browne-Ferrigno (2003), career aspirations, or lack of them, did not affect engagement with the programme; rather, the overriding motivations for engagement were reported as a moral commitment to social justice for children, passion for teaching, personal and organisational agency, enchantment with leadership and recognising system wide opportunities. Sitting within the 'accession' stage of Gronn's (1999) sequential model of the lives of leaders, around half of the SLEs and recipients felt that they had been

professionally developed by the experience and that they had progressed in their journey towards more senior leadership roles. Where purposeful engagement with the programme had been lacking (where schools had not requested support), little professional growth was noted. In light of this, purposeful engagement is placed as a prerequisite in the re-working of Browne-Ferrigno's (2003) framework, rather than an aspect of it.

To summarise, the leadership learning that occurred for SLEs and recipients through their engagement with the programme can be viewed through a new conceptualisation of professional growth, encompassing the elements of role conceptualisation, identity transformation and personal capacity, adapted from the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003). These findings, coupled with the facilitating conditions for each element of professional growth, contribute to the knowledge base of leadership development, with a particular focus on middle leaders, at a time when such research is limited (Barber et al., 2010; Zhang, 2013).

To answer the question, '*How can the SLE experience be modified in order to best achieve its desired outcomes?*' literature relating to practices in leadership development and how adults learn best are used as a framework within which to explore the tensions and successes of the role, to confirm and strengthen conceptualisations and procedures of good practice. While recommendations for practice are offered in **6.4**, it is worth noting here that in agreement with Bush et al. (2007) and Dimmock (2012) the formal, standardised training offered to SLEs had limitations and was not well matched to the needs of the more experienced leaders; findings support a more 'personalised' approach as advocated in 'The

Golden Triangle' (see figure 6.1). In addition to this, a fundamental element of the success of the deployment was the 'matching' of the SLE to the recipient school; in this sample, this occurred where the school addressed their own needs and requested support, rather than a 'done to' model, where the TSA or the LA decided upon the deployment. Findings here strengthen Barber et al.'s (2010) model of how adults learn best, demonstrated in more successful deployments when participants felt 'motivated', 'in charge', 'pushed out of their comfort zone' and where there were clear learning systems and infrastructure in place. Coupled with this, the successful matching of the SLE to their recipient demonstrates Rousseau's (1990) 'psychological contract' through which the unwritten 'reciprocal obligations' are met and the professional relationship entered into is a positive one for both individuals. Engagement with the SLE programme demonstrates participation in 'system leadership', across schools. This study contributes to the growing knowledge base of system leadership and a self managing school system, providing new insights into the benefits and 'costs' (both physical and emotional) to the home school of such participation. All of these elements are included in figure 6.1, demonstrating a new conceptualisation for leadership learning.

### **6.3 Implications**

In discussing the implications of this research, it is necessary to consider why this work is of significance and for whom. The key tenets proposed within the study include: a new conceptualisation of leadership development both within and across schools and a new conceptualisation of 'professional growth', including typologies demonstrating the concepts of greater role conceptualisation, professional identity and personal capacity. As an evaluative case study,



knowledge as to whether or not the intended aims of the Government are being met is also of importance and recommendations for improved practice are made. These features are discussed in turn.

Although the NCTL have recently developed a leadership curriculum (NCTL, 2013b), outside of the college and across the literature, there is no consensus as to what constitutes a coherent leadership preparation programme (Bush, 2008; Dimmock, 2012). Building on the findings in this study and drawing together features deemed good practice in the literature in terms of leadership development and how adults learn best, a new conceptualisation of leadership development is offered. As discussed in **6.1 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Development'** (see figure 6.1) proposes that any development of knowledge and skills is personalised, matched to need and that development occurs through the enactment of a leadership role, while working towards achieving wider school improvement objectives. This new conceptualisation also includes aspects of learning for the SLE that arise from engagement with 'lateral' development across schools such as establishing a wider professional reputation and stepping out of their comfort zone. For the recipient, the emotional support offered, as well as the employment of strategies such as coaching and modelling to facilitate 'learning leaps' are noted. This new conceptualisation of leadership learning is of significance for the Government and policy makers at a time when the development of future school leaders is crucial. It is also of importance to the NCTL, the key agent for delivering Government leadership policy, as national programmes are written and developed. In addition, this conceptualisation can also be used on a much smaller scale in individual schools, by head teachers and

their senior leadership teams to reflect on their work as they seek to professionally develop their members of staff; key strategies of talent management. This is important as it offers an understanding of leadership development for middle leaders, based on the professional and personal context of the participant. The focus may be on developing aspects of classroom practice, leading networks or teams across schools. As well as for policy and practice, this new understanding is also significant for educational researchers and academics, building upon existing knowledge and frameworks of leadership development and adult learning and offering a framework that may contribute to a new model of leadership learning both within and across schools. This is also significant for policy makers and practitioners alike at a time when system leadership is high on the Government's agenda in a changing educational landscape (NCTL, 2013a).

In addition to a new understanding of leadership learning, a new conceptualisation of professional growth is offered, building on the work of Browne-Ferrigno (2003), drawing upon the findings of this study and other theoretical frameworks. To summarise, this new understanding of professional growth encapsulates the following aspects:

- *greater role conceptualisation of senior leadership roles coupled with a transformed view of the organisation;*
- *socialisation experiences nurturing feelings of 'belonging' and a coherent leadership identity and*
- *high self belief leading to increased personal capacity.*

It can be argued that these aspects of professional growth are the aims of leadership development activities; to secure greater role conceptualisation, a coherent leadership identity and increased personal capacity. In this way, the

framework offers both practical and conceptual elements that are of potential significance to educational researchers, policy makers, leadership programme developers and senior leaders in schools to develop and prepare their own leaders and to increase the leadership capacity within their organisation and across clusters of schools. This conceptualisation of professional growth can be applied to leaders at all levels from a class teacher beginning to lead a subject to an experienced senior leader wishing to secure a headship or an experienced head teacher taking on a federation of schools. In presenting conditions that facilitate professional growth in any one aspect, leadership development activities can be designed to overcome barriers to advancement. The typologies offered within each aspect contribute to the tools available to 'unpick' these elements enabling support for the aspiring leader to be targeted.

The Government asserts that the fundamental aim of the SLE role is to demonstrate 'a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people by developing leadership capacity in other schools' (NCTL, 2014a). Coupled with this, there are claims that it will reap benefits for the SLE, their home school and the recipient school (NCTL, 2012). Given these wider aims, based on this evaluative case study focusing on one TSA, it is possible to say that where the matching of SLE to the recipient school was successful, these wider Government aims were met. While it is difficult to verify that improved pupil outcomes were a direct result of the SLE deployments, in three recipient schools there was a perception that pupil outcomes had improved. In terms of developing leadership capacity, the majority of SLEs (n=6) reported increased self belief and felt that they had been professionally developed by their engagement with the programme contributing to

developing 'system' leadership capacity across this community of schools. Three out of four the middle leader recipients reported a greater understanding of senior leadership roles and expressed a change in perception. Where this was not reported either the middle leader was already an experienced leader or the matching of the SLE was not perceived to have been successful. Deployments were regarded as less successful where the SLEs were assigned in a 'done to' model and not requested by the school. The findings demonstrate that for these recipients there was limited motivation to engage with the programme and the absence of a 'psychological contract' between the SLE and the recipient. As a very early study into an evolving role, where this was the case, this has been reflected on and improvements have been made by the TSA in light of this. In terms of benefits for the home school, all three head teachers of SLEs reported that their staff had been professionally developed through the experience and had demonstrated the benefits of this in their home school.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for further work**

Suggestions for further study include: extending the research design to include SLEs from other TSAs both across the West Midlands and nationally; to further explore the concept of 'learning leaps' and transformation of view point, to further explore the notion of self belief and its contribution to professional growth and to consider further the concept of 'emotional coherence' (Crawford, 2007) in the journey to senior leadership. Further study in these areas may potentially strengthen the new conceptualisation of leadership learning offered here and may contribute to a new model for leadership development in the current educational landscape. Alongside this, further research may contribute to a deeper

understanding of professional growth and how elements such as emotional support may be best used.

As an evaluative case study focusing on the professional growth of participants, the aims of the research necessitated a small scale design, concerned with the SLEs and their deployments through one TSA. Given the infancy of the role, at the time the empirical work for this study was undertaken, all the SLEs and all the recipient schools in this TSA were approached to participate. Although twenty-one participants were interviewed offering a range of perspectives to enhance 'trustworthiness', a larger scale study after a greater number of deployments would contribute further to the knowledge found here. This may be achieved through at first extending the sample to include SLEs from other TSAs in the West Midlands, then across England. The focus could also be extended to include SLEs from secondary as well as primary schools. A larger, wider sample would promote a study different in nature to this; while the focus on the professional growth of participants could remain, a larger study across TSAs would facilitate comparisons of practice that are not achievable in this study. This would further contribute to the knowledge base of research for middle leaders and middle leadership development at a time when more work in this area is desirable (Zhang, 2013).

In this study, greater role conceptualisation was coupled with a reported shift in perspective to a view of the wider organisation. While Meyer and Land (2003) suggest that crossing a 'threshold concept' necessitates a 'conceptual paradigm shift', could it also be seen that a change in perspective might facilitate greater understanding. Further research would advance this further; did greater

understanding of senior leadership roles facilitate this shift in perspective or was it the other way around? 'Self belief' also emerged as a significant theme in the findings. The majority of SLEs (n=6) and two recipients reported an increase in self belief, reporting increased self confidence and the desire to undertake further deployments or more senior leadership roles; coupled with high levels of leadership knowledge and skills, this has been described as 'personal capacity' and a typology is offered (figure 5.9). In this study, 'self belief' is presented as an additional aspect of professional growth, however, the nature of how self belief can be fostered and exactly how it promotes professional growth is worthy of further research; as Rhodes (2012) asks:

*'... what is presently unclear is whether self belief is an intrinsic component of leadership potential and performance, or does the opportunity to perform enable self belief to grow and the subsequent journey to leadership to proceed? (p10).*

Rhodes (2013) suggests that the role of 'emotion' in the transformative journey to senior leadership 'remains elusive and unexplained' (p7); the findings in this study have congruence with this. Two recipients and one SLE noted 'emotional support' as an important aspect of their deployments. While in these instances, emotional support appeared to reduce anxiety and promote feelings of self-efficacy, further research would offer greater insight into understanding how emotional resilience or emotional 'coherence' (Crawford, 2007) may be strengthened to facilitate the transition to senior leadership.

## 6.5 Recommendations for practice

Suggestions for modifications to the role to best achieve the desired outcomes were offered in **Chapter 5**, The Discussion. Here, recommendations were made both from the findings and the relevant theoretical frameworks drawn upon (for example, Bush et al., 2007; Dimmock, 2012) and suggestions from the participants. To summarise, the recommendations for future practice are:

- *more 'personalised' needs based training offered initially to SLEs to reflect their own leadership experience to ensure it is purposeful and of value;*
- *careful matching of the skills and experience of the SLEs to the requirements of the recipient school to facilitate the establishment of a 'psychological contract' and a professional working relationship;*
- *ensuring adequate capacity in the home school to avoid excessive work load or 'burn out' of the SLE;*
- *undertaking deployments in pairs to facilitate the sharing of ideas;*
- *opportunities to 'shadow' other SLEs, to learn from peers;*
- *establishing effective dialogue between SLEs' home school head teachers and the TSA, to ensure there is a shared understanding of workload and commitment from all parties.*

In addition to these, 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning' (figure 6.1) may be considered when planning deployments to facilitate optimum leadership learning for the participants; this could encourage a personalised, learning centred approach, drawing on the personal and professional context of the recipient, and ensuring that strategies such as coaching and modelling are used effectively to facilitate 'learning leaps' (Wisker et al., 2009) and overcome any 'troublesome knowledge' (Meyer and Land, 2003). In addition to this, the conceptualisation of 'professional growth' (figure 5.11) can be drawn upon as a tool to advance the journey to senior leadership.

## 6.6 Summary

To conclude, the findings from this evaluative case study demonstrate that where the matching of the SLE and the recipient school were successful the broad aims of the Government were met. These include:

- *a shared perception that pupil outcomes improved;*
- *increased leadership capacity in the recipient school;*
- *increased leadership capacity for the SLEs and their home schools.*

However, in addressing the research questions, this study illuminates great potential for the SLE role and similar models of school to school support. In a changing and challenging educational climate, the SLE deployments facilitate the employment of 'The Golden Triangle of Leadership Learning' (figure 6.1), promoting the personalised learning of leadership knowledge and skills through the enactment of a leadership role and wider school improvement aims. This model relies upon taking into account the personal and professional context of the individual in their day to day work and necessitates a learning centred approach, with the improvement of pupil outcomes at its heart. The model advocates the use of coaching and modelling as effective learning strategies; where a successful professional relationship or 'psychological contract' (Rousseau, 1990) is established between coach and coachee, or SLE and recipient, transformational 'learning leaps' (Wisker et al., 2009) can be made. The model can be applied to the recipient in their own school and to SLEs in their system leadership role. This approach is therefore of great significance at a time when a leadership crisis is reported (Rhodes et al., 2008) and the middle leader role is becoming increasingly important (Zhang, 2013). The majority of SLEs and half of the middle leader recipients in this study reported advancement in aspects of professional growth as



a consequence of their engagement with the programme, resulting in greater role conceptualisation, a strengthening of leadership identity and increased personal capacity. The conceptualisation of professional growth offered in this study (figure 5.11) can be utilised as a tool to promote further advancement on the journey to senior leadership. The findings in this study demonstrate that the role of the SLE has great potential to be instrumental in facilitating the professional growth of middle leaders, thus increasing leadership capacity both within and across schools, as we look to a new horizon for the future of leadership in schools.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1 Sample of Interview Questions for the SLE**

1. Can you briefly summarise your teaching career so far? (length of time as a teacher, number of schools)
2. Can you describe your position in school prior to becoming an SLE?
3. Can you tell me why you decided to apply for the role of SLE?
4. Can you tell me about any training you undertook for the role – did you perceive it to be useful?
5. Can you describe your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an SLE?
6. How many deployments have you undertaken?
7. Can you tell me what was involved in these deployments (length of time, frequency, nature of the work).
8. What key strategies did you employ?
9. What strategies do you feel were most successful? Were there any that perhaps weren't as successful?
10. What do you perceive to be the key outcomes of your deployment?
11. Have you found that your role was different in different schools? In what way?
12. Have you noticed any changes in your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership in school as a result of your SLE experience?
13. Have you noticed any other differences in your perceptions about school leadership?
14. Can you describe any changes in your professional behaviour?
15. Do you feel 'professionally developed' by the SLE experience? In what ways?
16. Can you identify any particular part of the SLE experience or activities as being important in your own professional development?
17. Has being an SLE changed your career aspirations? Would you like to seek further leadership roles?
18. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as an SLE?
19. Can you recommend any improvements to the role?

**APPENDIX 2 Sample of Interview Questions for the Recipient**

1. Can you briefly summarise your teaching career so far?
2. Can you describe your position in school?
3. Can you describe the SLE deployment in your school?
4. Can you describe specifically how they worked with you.
5. Were you clear in the intended outcomes for the deployment of the SLE in your school?
6. Do you perceive the key outcomes to have been met?
7. What key strategies did they employ?
8. What strategies do you feel were most successful?
9. What were least successful?
10. Have you noticed any differences in your perceptions about school leadership through your work with the SLE?
11. Can you describe any changes in your professional behaviour?
12. Do you feel 'professionally developed' through the SLE experience?
13. Can you identify any particular part of the SLE experience or activities as being important in your own professional development?
14. Has engagement with the SLE changed your career aspirations? Would you like to seek further leadership roles?
15. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of working alongside an SLE?
16. Can you recommend any improvements to the role?

### **APPENDIX 3 Thesis Summary for Participants**

The purpose of this proposed project is to explore perceptions around the role of the SLE, for both the SLE themselves and the recipient schools. In particular, the project will explore the notion of 'transformation' and 'identity' of middle leaders. It is hoped that this will further develop understanding of the transition to senior leadership and effective professional development that may facilitate this.

The proposed research attempts to build on existing leadership research that explores the notion of 'transformation' to leadership and a change in 'professional identity', but specifically looks at the role of middle leaders rather than head teachers. It also seeks to explore how the role of the SLE is conceptualised differently and how leadership learning occurs. The research questions therefore, are as follows:

- 1. How is leadership learning within the SLE deployments conceptualised in different schools?*
- 2. How has the SLE deployment facilitated the leadership learning of the SLE/recipient?*
- 3. What professional growth may have occurred for the SLE/recipient as a result of the SLE deployment?*
- 4. How can the SLE experience be modified in order to best achieve its desired outcomes?*

The expected outcomes include gaining a deeper understanding of the transition to leadership and what leadership learning strategies may facilitate this effectively. It intends to focus on the views of the SLEs and middle leaders in the recipient schools.

## APPENDIX 4 Sample consent letter

Dear Specialist Leader of Education,

I am currently involved in Doctoral research at the University of Birmingham and as part of my study I am gathering information in relation to a research project exploring perceptions around the role of the SLE, for both the SLE themselves and the recipient schools. In particular, the project will explore the notion of 'transformation' and 'identity' of middle leaders. I have attached an outline of my project with this letter. The purpose of this letter is to gain your written consent to be interviewed.

The purpose of the interview is to gain some insights into your perceptions as an SLE. The format will be a audio taped interview lasting approximately one hour, completed at your convenience at your school. A list of the interview questions has been attached for your reference.

The tape of the interview will then be transcribed and analysed, along with responses from other participants involved. The confidential and anonymous data gathered in this way will then be used in my thesis. A transcription of your interview will be made available to you prior to the final analysis of the data.

The research will ensure confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of the treatment of data in accordance with British Ethics Research Association (BERA, 2011) principles and the University of Birmingham's research guidelines. Research data and evidence will be stored, retained and made accessible, for verification purposes for a period of ten years. The analysis of the data from the interviews will be anonymous to others. Data will be identified using coding, with your name and any identifying characteristics removed. Your name will not be stored by any electronic means. You will also have the right to withdraw up to two weeks after the data has been collected.

I would be grateful if you could sign and return the attached consent form for my records in the envelope provided.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sarah Allen

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Please tick where appropriate:

- I agree to be interviewed for the research:
- I request a copy of the transcript of my interview:
- I request a summary of the research ('headline only' copy)
- I request a copy of the thesis (50,000 words):


Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 5 Example of interview transcript (identifying features removed)**

**Interviewer:** So thank you for agreeing to give me your time.

Interviewee: That's fine, no problem.

**Interviewer:** So can you briefly summarise your teaching career so far?

Interviewee: Basically I have been teaching now for sixteen years, this is the only school I have worked in so I started here as an NQT

**Interviewer:** At 'x's yes

Interviewee: And I basically became team leader because I was in the classroom as an NQT for a couple of years in Year 4, moved into Year 6 became a literacy subject leader initially for key stage 2 and then I crossed the school then became phase leader for phase years 5 and 6 then I became deputy head about nine years ago.

**Interviewer:** Oh right, quite early on in your teaching career. Seven years in?

Interviewee: And then I became head of school in September.

**Interviewer:** So at what point did you become an SLE? How long have you been an SLE?

Interviewee: I have been an SLE; I think I was in the first cohort that went through, so right from the start, so what's that about 18 months, something like that.

**Interviewer:** And can you tell me why you applied for the role?

Interviewee: Yes, because I was sort of doing the role anyway, if you like without title, I have been supporting a school over in 'x' and it looked like where I was moving in my career, you know, the whole school to school support thing, so that was why and obviously it's good for me as someone who has been here for quite a long time it's good for me to go into other schools as well, so it's a reciprocal thing as well. So that was the main reason and I felt it would be just a good opportunity. It's a new role; 'x' who is the executive head is the national leader of education so it seemed a natural thing for me to do really.

**Interviewer:** Did you undertake any training for the role?

Interviewee: Training, we did some training as a group teaching school, as in look at what the role was but in fairness it was all very new and so it was a bit suck it and see really. Yes it was I can't remember what the training was but it was minimal training around it, it was more a case of learn on the job and really the people who they had chosen to be SLE's at that time were people who were confident enough to go out to any school anyway.

**Interviewee:** And I guess you had been doing that anyway.

Interviewer: One of the things I remember talking about when we met together for the first or second time was around protocols really, I was quite concerned that people, there were a lot of individuals from a lot of different schools where protocols are different. We were coming together under the SLE banner, if you like, for the 'x' teaching school alliance and I was anxious that we had some set protocols that we could work towards as a group so that we knew, if you like, not how to behave, but how to behave in another school, it's one thing being in your own school and going into another school as an individual it's another thing going in as an SLE representing the teaching school alliance, so I was quite concerned that we had a set of protocols around that. And at that time it occurred to me that the whole role was unknown and so there weren't protocols, all these things it felt that we were making it up as we went along really at that stage and that was just the nature of how it was in the early days because it hadn't happened before.

**Interviewer: Sort of evolving**

Interviewee: Yes, which is what happens, there wasn't any clear set guidance from the government about what protocols you go in with, how you should behave, all those sort of things, and so it was just a case of whatever the needs were we would go in and hopefully help the school with those.

**Interviewer: That's my next question; can you describe understanding of the roles and responsibilities of an SLE? So in the beginning that wasn't necessarily clear but is it a fact that you tried to meet the needs of the recipient school whatever they may be, that kind of thing?**

Interviewee: I think one of the things that I have learnt really is it is just the supportive role under the umbrella of teaching schools alliance, under their title of SLE but what you are doing is you are going in with the experience that you have had in leadership, looking as a critical friend almost at the school, which tends to have been the role I have been playing, an invited in role rather than an SLE forced on a school role, so for instance, just to give you an example I worked with a school over in 'x' and that was at the invitation of 'x' and the head of the school, who had not long gone into requires improvement from being good and they were looking at setting up some sort of bespoke training programme for their middle leaders and so we sat down with the head of the school and developed a programme there and then that we would then deliver. So its I feel that's the way its evolving and so the whole school to school support thing I feel a lot of that is to do with looking at what the needs of the school are and historically that has been the outside school looking in doing that, but more and more it seems the schools asking for the support. It may not know exactly what it wants but generally schools will come and say we have gone into a category and these are the things on the action plan and so these were the issues, can we set something up to address some of these things. So that's my understanding of it in terms of roles and responsibilities are to go in and deliver whatever it is maybe even find out initially what it is the school is looking for and then support the school with the delivery of training around

what the perceived needs are but also then through doing that identify whether the perceived needs of the school are accurate. Is it that it's the data, or is it there is an underlying issue with the ethos in the school which is having a bigger impact on the wider school community including the data? So it's those two things really.

**Interviewer:** So can you tell me how many deployments you have undertaken?

Interviewee: Yes in the role, two really.

**Interviewer:** Two that was 'x' and

Interviewee: 'x', down the road which we were all sort of pulled into.

**Interviewer:** So with 'x' it was a case of designing the training for middle leaders?

Interviewee: Well to be honest my involvement with them was more senior leaders so I worked with one of the assistant heads and deputy head and I basically met them on two occasions and really the first meeting was about meeting them in order to assess what we felt the needs were in the leadership team but really what it became was quite quickly a conversation about them and how they were with and because they had worked together as a team without a head for a while and then this head was going to be appointed and it was to do with them as individuals how they felt about it really. We tried to get underneath, we could see what the data said about the school, we could see what they had done in the time they had been there to pull the school up, etc, etc, but actually how do you feel about what's about to happen to you and actually it came out that they were very anxious about the thought of, just to give you an analogy really, it was as though under the previous head there was this little plant that had just started to sprout, and somebody had come along and stuffed a bucket over the top of them and totally stifled them really, whereas when the head had gone they basically ran the school, the bucket had come off, they had really grown and they were really worried that the bucket was going to be put back on top and that everything they had done, everything they had learned, everything they had moved the school into would be suddenly taken away and so there was a lot of anxiety around that so really you know why we only met together twice, there was a lot of work around, how they were feeling, what they were going to do in order to make sure that they didn't get the bucket put back on so that was that one. The length of time, frequency, you know, obviously looking at things like Ofsted reports, data, before you go into a school so you know the school you know what the issues are, because you don't want to just rely on what people are telling you. Frequency a couple of times and nature of the work really was to look at setting up for the new head, it was a health check of the school really so as a team we were setting up for the new head, potentially a report that they could come in and pickup without having to do all the work again themselves and say the issues with the data is this and this and this, in numeracy the issues are these things and as a team we worked across the board doing some lesson observations with people and looking at data,



looking at what the issues were across the school, what the capacity was for the leadership team and what their plan was in terms of being able to cope with it and just a general health check in preparation for the new head.

**Interviewer: So that was the one school and the other one**

**Interviewee:** The other school in 'x', that was like I say a bespoke package really, so 'x' and I met with the head and we teased out really. Obviously the school had been a good school and had gone down to requires improvement; unfortunate really, they were unlucky with the inspection and the team had focused on phonics. Basically what we did was before I went in, before I met with the guy I read the Ofsted report, looked at their data, and looked at the recommendations that had been made and the action plan that had been drawn up by the head and really came to some conclusions myself from looking at that and then met with him and between him, me and 'x' we came up with a little programme of support, which was initially a two day session, a Monday and a Tuesday, one day at 'x' and one day at 'x', running a programme called recognising outstanding because he has got some middle leaders who were coming out of the classroom in September, they were outstanding practitioners themselves but it's one thing to be outstanding and another thing to recognise from someone else so we set up a programme of joint lesson observations, looking at data, you know doing a triangulation planning mark in the whole lot really and being able to then articulate back what outstanding looks like in order to be able to identify that in others, identify where its missing in others in order to raise people up really and that was the idea so on the Monday in 'x' where they did a couple of lesson observations and sat in on a data sort of analysis meeting, then they came here and did two lesson observations in the morning and a learning walk around school with me and then spent the afternoon on picking what they had been learning over the two days and being able to articulate that.

**Interviewer: So, my next question is what key strategies did you employ, I mean in terms of those middle leaders it sounds as though it was the whole kind of package really.**

**Interviewee:** Yes, so there was definitely coaching going on, you know, sort of get them to try and draw out from them what the issues were, definite training, obviously modelling. I sat with them to do the lesson observation and sort of talked through what I was looking for, because it's one thing to model, to have someone model to someone, but actually if they don't know what they are looking for, they won't see it, they won't see the subtleties of an outstanding lesson and so there is a whole range of strategies that we used obviously questioning, all sorts of things.

**Interviewer: That's great, thank you. I guess you felt they were all successful really then?**

Interviewee: Yes, I did, I think the success came because it was a tailored programme, it was bespoke it was designed for them as a team with a specific goal in mind which was to help them and to recognise what outstanding was and to have the skills in order to do that and so we put things into place which would help them, so yes, I felt they were all successful.

**Interviewer: And the key outcomes were met.**

Interviewee: Yes, yes,

**Interviewer: My next question, you have answered that as well, because it was have you found that your role is different in different schools and obviously you have had two very different deployments, two different experiences, and I think that's the nature of the role, as you said at the beginning it's very diverse and the way it's going you always want particular things so I am sure no two SLE's will have the same experience s**

Interviewee: And I think, you know, those two deployments they were very, very different so the one was a done to model, you know and for the whole point of the health check, when I say done to, we sat down with leaders we talked to, well actually, we were going in to their because we had been asked to by 'x' to do this health check really probably through the local authority and then the second one was definitely a done with model we were working with them, they would come to us for support , two very different models just from two deployments, so yes quite different.

**Interviewer: In terms of your own professional development have you noticed any change in your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of senior leadership as a result of the SLE experience? I guess you were quite a way on in your own leadership career?**

Interviewee: I think one of the things that you always see is that no two leaders do things in the same way, that data is now the most significant thing which affects school leaders really, I think

**Interviewer: Have you felt that your own understanding has increased because you have gone out and worked with these other schools?**

Interviewee: Well, yes, I think that I guess for me it's about, I almost go in thinking this a bit like an Ofsted inspection in a way, what is it, I am trying to glean the Information from the website from various information pools that are out there before I go into the school and so you build a picture of the school and you know that's one of the things that I have learnt, where Ofsted look for their information and the fact that they go in already from that information, from the data, from the website, etc, they go in with a picture of the school and you know I kind of knew that any way and it was kind of, it's been highlighted really.

**Interviewer: Have you noticed any other differences in your perception about school leadership?**

Interviewee: Umm, I think one of the things that I have noticed is that school leaders can be quite vulnerable actually, and at times need careful handling often are in the position of needing the SLE team, you know, HMI have been in or OFSTED have been in and that's not always been a pleasant experience for those people and so I, sometimes people need building back up, you know to have their confidence restored and actually I wasn't expecting to be doing that when I started out but that's one of the things that I have really found myself doing, is not just looking at the data, not just looking at the action plans, but at the people and about the emotional needs of the people In order to keep going in difficult situations and the support that they get or don't get.

**Interviewer: Because this sort of support is face to face so you are going to build that relationship with the people that you are working with, aren't you?**

Interviewee: There's also because you are equals really people trust you, people tell you things, so because they like to say it face to face they find a level of trust with you and because of that they will open up about things personally.

**Interviewer: If you are coming from outside and so it's somebody new that they can talk to that is out of the loop**

Interviewee: And sometimes being, sometimes the meetings will take place out of their school and sometimes meeting and talking outside of their school helps to open things up a bit more.

**Interviewer: Can you describe any changes in your own professional behaviour maybe here back at your own school, do you feel it has given you more confidence or?**

Interviewee: Umm, yes, I think the whole thing that I have just talked about, in terms of the emotional needs of people has been something which

**Interviewer: You weren't expecting it were you, to learn about**

Interviewee: Yea, yea, you know I was expecting to go and do quite kind of not cold job but sort of the data and the observations but actually getting under the skin of people has been as important really. I have always had this theory that teachers are just people who are waiting to be found out, it's not particularly very good and because lots of people who are in the profession are perfectionists and therefore but also because of the nature of teaching, you know, you are a teacher, it's what you do, and you know for someone to say that you don't do that very well, is a smite on you as a person, and to have that, they are not talking about your lesson actually despite the fact that they are they are talking about you so when they criticise your lesson they are criticising you and that works all the way up through the school in whatever role you are in, and I guess really that it's almost as though people are waiting for the criticism, waiting for the but when you get the

feedback, the lesson was good but and I, getting underneath people's skin a little bit and trying to help them see they are in the role that they are in on merit. I have also got a bit of a theory on how being secure in who you are and being secure in the profession you are in, the job you are in, on merit and having various anchor points and helping people understand that anchor points are when you go climbing you will hammer into the rock and then you will climb in a bit further and you will hammer in another anchor point and if you ever slip or fall you only ever fall as far as the last anchor point rather than fall and crash all the way down to the bottom of the rock and actually if we can get people to bang in anchor points, points where they say you know I got this job on merit, bang, whatever lesson observation feedback I get is not going to bring me crashing down. It might knock me but I am not coming crashing down because I know I got this job on merit and I know in the past I have done good lesson observations and try to help people to build some of these anchor points into their own lives, into their own work and for me that has been the whole emotional journey around that support. To be honest it's bigger than the whole SLE thing something that I am interested in generally but it's been heightened with the SLE thing.

**Interviewer:** And is that because you have had a chance to work outside your own school?

Interviewee: Yes, I think, you know, I have done two deployments as an SLE, I have worked in another school and actually when I analyse what is similar about the schools I have been in, you know, various things are similar but actually the emotional side of things, how people view themselves, how fragile people are is one thing that stands out to me.

**Interviewer:** Because as teachers professional identity is part of them, isn't it? Really interesting.

Interviewee: And for me that has been the thing, obviously there are issues with data, issues in all schools but the thing that I guess surprised me a little bit was the whole emotional well being of people and I don't know, maybe it's just me as a person but actually I have been very interested in how I find, or how I found myself in each of the schools asking questions about how they are, about how they feel and those kind of questions as well as they talk to me about the data and other questions. So yes that's been part of the role that I wasn't expecting really.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel like generally professionally developed by the SLE role?

Interviewee: Yes, I feel that I have really enjoyed the experiences that it has given me going into different schools so you know that I said I have worked in other schools prior to this but not as many and this will give me an experience of getting into more schools working with more people outside my own school, so yes that's been

**Interviewer:** So is that the key thing you found most useful for your own professional development being able to work outside of your own school

**Interviewee:** There are two things really, one is that, and two is identifying what it is that makes a school almost succeed or fail and the more schools you work in the more similarities you see between them in those areas. Umm, so that's been good from my point of view.

**Interviewer:** Umm, has being an SLE changed or impacted on your own career aspirations at all?

**Interviewee:** Well, it's funny when I thought about moving up through teaching one of the things that the head here, 'x', said to me at the time, she employed me initially and she was a fantastic head teacher, she said to me don't rush into headship, because actually where do you go from there and you have to be ready for it, and I will never forget that and it's interesting, it's almost with the sort of as more and more schools become academies, the local authority shrinks and has to kind of think about what its delivering and how its delivering it, almost a door has shut into the local authority, not shut but is much more limited, the opportunities, lots of people used to go from headship into the local authority but another door has opened with school to school support really so yes you know I think that working with other schools has been something which whether that's changed my career aspirations or just helped me to have opportunities that I may not ordinarily have had so many of so it's definitely helped me to see that school to school support is the way forward and maybe something I would like to get involved in more.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as an SLE? Any additional benefits?

**Interviewee:** I think whenever you go out to other schools, there's a cost to it for you personally in time and energy and all the rest of it, but I think going out to any school there is always a benefit, there is always a benefit coming back into your own school and practice what you see, it might be a display, it might be a system so there is always a benefit, and I think that is important whatever the cost to you as an individual, whatever the cost to the school, collectively there is always a benefit as well, whatever the school, whether the school is in special measures or not there is always benefits to go in elsewhere and broaden your horizons.

**Interviewer:** So can you recommend any improvements to the role?

**Interviewee:** Yes, I do think that maybe more training, I do think, not quite that we fell into it, and in fairness it was evolving role it was a bit like the teaching school alliance, if you talk to 'x' about the teaching school alliance she will tell you that initially they were muddling through they had no idea when they took it on how big it would be, the implications of all of that etc, etc, and I think it's a bit like the SLE role when it all first started you know, it

was a good idea of someone in a department somewhere and actually like anything people have good ideas are often not the people who think about the detail of implementing those ideas and actually we were kind of, not quite making it up as we went along but it would have helped if there had been more training available at the time.

**Interviewer:** You talked at the beginning about making sure protocols were in place when you went into school so everyone was singing from the same hymn sheet, so to speak, did that happen or is it happening now or

**Interviewee:** (Sigh) To be honest it was muted as a good idea that we would take on as it happened, well yes but, so a document was put together but I am not sure how well it's kind of followed up, whether the schools themselves receive a copy of it. I would maybe like to see the schools receive a little pack, this is the role of the SLE, this is what their remit is and I think there is some of that in place but I think when it all first started it wasn't there. I am not sure now what the training procedures are for SLE's but in fairness to 'x' and 'x' teaching school alliance, they have come a long way on the journey and I would imagine things are a lot tighter now just because there will be more guidance out there, I would imagine. You will know better than me.

**Interviewer:** Yes and more SLE are as well, locally and nationally really, people can you know pull their ideas together, can't they I guess.

**Thank you very much for your time, is there anything else you would like to say?**

**Interviewee:** NO

**Interviewer:** That's brilliant, thank you







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